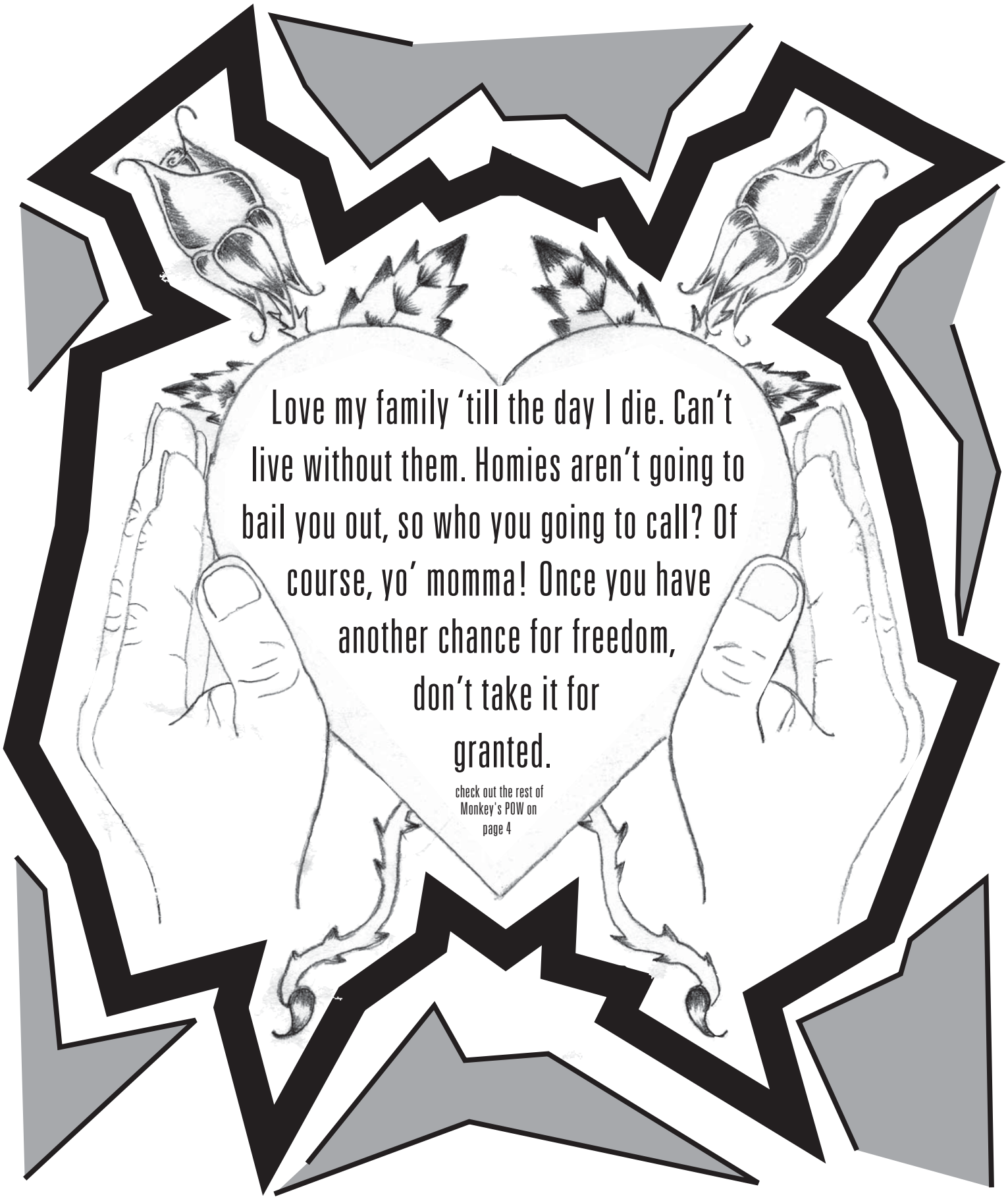

Love my family 'till the day I die. Can't live without them. Homies aren't going to bail you out, so who you going to call? Of course, yo' momma! Once you have another chance for freedom, don't take it for granted.

check out the rest of Monkey's POW on page 4

EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 12.06

Another week another Beat! How's life going for you editorial note readers? Getting your visits? Receiving them loving letters? Doing a good program on the unit? Feeling inspired? Inspired to step up to the plate and take responsibility, inspired to touch a life with knowledge. Inspired to save the next generation from falling into the traps you find yourself in? Hope so.

Speaking of knowledge we have plenty of good reading for you this week, but before you make your way to the latest offerings , we hope you will take a few minutes to be inspired by yet another blast from the past.

Last week we treated you with a couple throwbacks from the Baby A era, well, during that same period was yet another incredible writer who every week stepped up with POWs (Pieces Of the Week) and that was a man who went by the name of Dwayne The Knowledge aka Dwayne Choate. Dwayne was housed for over two years in the max unit in Santa Clara County, where he was tried as an adult under Prop 21. He came to juvenile as a 16 year old left after his 18th birthday to prison, where he is today. What we remember best about Dwayne was his ability to write on our topics each week and within each Beat session he would create a magnificent piece for the paper. He not only would quietly write, he would also read his pieces aloud to the class. We also remember Dwayne would sit in the front row of our class and truly set the tone for a respectful session, and Dat Nguyen, who we will feature next week, would sit in the back of each class. Bookends in keeping order and pushing and challenging the rest of the class to write and to keep it real. Dwayne wasn't a quiet leader like Baby A, he was a character, who would definitely voice his opinions and distaste for things. He would always step up and read the topics. He would challenge his peers and he would write on the spot. The man shared major gifts – his writing — and inspired plenty of writers in Santa Clara County Juvenile hall and beyond, as do today's POW writers, such as; Big Vic, Jacob, Meen and Jesse, to name a few. With that said, we haven't heard from Dwayne in several years, but his spirit will forever burn in Beat lore. We suspect in time he will sneak his head out once again. Read on...

My Distinguishing Marks
my distinguishing marks
come from thugs that come out in the dark
got one from a 15-year-old boy when I was seven years old being hard
i'm 16 years old and still remember the day i got hit
sticking up for my 12-year-old sister, got me hit with a brick
a scar on my back from a broken broomstick
got scars from barbed-wire on my wrist
had to run after pulling a lick
was running from the police and cut it going over a fence
got cut over my left eye at a party fighting bent
not all my scars come from wars though
not all my scars come from doing something illegal
some scars came from being a kid
getting beat with a belt for being suspended
or getting stole on for something bad i did
and one of my scars i was actually born with
got one on my chest from a knife i got sliced with
my dad did it to me, pops was straight wicked
my most distinguishing mark
you can only see at certain times
when i feel pain, anger, when someone tells me a lie
or plays with my mind
this distinguishing mark is seen in my eyes
when you see it, it's a signal or giveaway of all the rage i have built up inside,
from all the nights when i was a kid and because i was hungry i laid in bed and cried
from being taken from my mother by a social worker that lied
from seeing my cousin's chest wide
open from a 12-gauge blast in a drive-by
from going to so many funerals
when i now go, i don't cry
from living life in pain, away from light, in a place that's dark
it's where, when, and how i received my distinguishing marks

Long Gone
Long gone is the old Dwayne
The one who was infatuated with the game
Out there smoking weed, drinking, flaggin', doing the gang thang
Mackin' all the fine ladies, letting my nuts hang
No longer waiting anxiously to return to the block to slang
I feel no need to ride on those who told on me and letting the weapon flame
I haven't transformed, but have slowly changed
I now realize knowledge is the way of the world's game,
so knowledge is who I am, and knowledge is who I'll be
Whether I go to the Pen, CYA, or return to the streets,
there will be no need to pack a gun; my pencil packs much heat
Wit' knowledge by the ton, I accumulate security
I strive to be free mentally, physically, and most of all economically,
because economy is what really runs the world, Gee
I know I got to have a solid financial plan before I return
to the streets because I plan to fail if I don't plan to make money,
I can't deal in the illicit; I need to do it legally,
Transform the game like Bugsy Siegal and Myer Lansky
The system wants me to fail so they can stick me in prison,
or should I say, the new form of slavery that came with capitalism.
Long gone is that boy who didn't listen.
No, I stay quiet as kept, ears open, eyes wide,
Now I'm down to fight socialism, and classism,
tooth and nail, do or die
I'll ride for my people
because the way things are going, we never be equal.
I ain't goin' be one of those people who stands out for the media,
trying to gain fame for themselves.
I'll stick to the back and do it all by myself,
Yeah, that's right, all alone.
So prepare yourself, America, for the man, Knowledge,
because that boy, Dwayne, is long gone!

The Difference
I realize now I was the one trippin'
pushing away outstretched helpful arms
the whole time slippin'.
Not realizing the consequences of my actions
out there on the streets trying to get things crackin'.
The difference now is that I'm haunted by flashbacks,
times of my past so clear,
times of my past so black.
It's all so clear:
knowledge, talent, skill – I had that
but after twelve years old I lost that.
From the age of thirteen years old and up
all I remember is selling crack,
by the age of fifteen, everything goes blurry,
I can't remember that,
incarceration smacks my face at sixteen
and I'm still livin' that,
trying to recover my clear past back.
By applying the inner power I've gained,
knowledge has helped and guided my change
my thought process once again rearranged.
No longer infatuated wit' the materialistic side of the game
no longer do I chase down ghetto fame.
I've given up on being infamous –
I got seventeen months in wit' 'bout eighty-two left
and already I'm sick of this,
wearing another's draws stained with what I hope is piss,
being just another number on a never ending numerical list,
filed like paper, stacked like boxes,
walking around labeled wit' a barcode
stored away to erode,
knowledge locked in my brain
anger on the verge to explode
I grab a pencil in my hand and I begin to unload
stagnated, my male hormones are growing mold.
But I won't give up, I won't fold
I'm the point guard with the ball
determined to score the last goal.
Managing my time, the difference in my life
is the difference in my mind!

No need to say anything else, Dwayne as he did so eloquently back in the day, spoke his truths.

This week's topics are "Forgetful" - What is it about forgetting? Are you a person that never forgets? Or, are you a person that forgets plenty. In truth, we all tend to forget, or shall we say we remember what we want to remember and we forget the things we do not want to recall. This week we want you writers to write what is something you will never ever forget and why? What makes this moment and/or thing an event that will forever hold a place in your memory? Or, tell us why we tend to forget, from your experience, the most important things, be it a family member's birthday, a job interview, a court date, a PO visit to name a few.

Our second topic, "What You Want People To Know When It's Your Time To Go?" - We all lead lives that we might, or might not, want people to know about... But while we're living them it's hard to tell what exactly we want people to know about them... However, when our time comes to no longer live, there may be things we want people to know that they don't already know...

So, what do you want people to know about you when it's your time to go? Do you want them to think you were the greatest hustler of all time? Do you want them to know you were a good mother or father? Do you want them to know how intelligent you really were? Or how important it was for you to make a difference for the next generation? Then after you write about what you want people to know when it's your time to go, think about why you want people to know that about you and write about that also... Thank you for sharing your thoughts on who you are. We hope all of us want to leave a positive legacy for the future.

Our last topic, "A Day To Observe..." - Recently, we just celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his birthday by observing the day as a holiday... This week we want you to tell us who do you think deserves a holiday? Why? This is your chance to create a national holiday for someone you really respect, so don't blow it... Who will it be?

All right this week's POW writers are Jesse (writes two) from Santa Cruz, Baby G from Marin, Monkey and Lawrence (writes two) from SF/YGC, Doog-e-fresh and Lil' Vietnamese from the 150 Crew.

With that said, lets send this issue out to the staff in juvenile hall who respect The Beat Within and respect the young people who are making an effort to leave the bullshhh of the streets behind them. Remember readers, life is short, lets do our part to make our lives safe, healthy and fulfilling. See you next week!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

Book Donor: Marisela Norte

Beat Supporters: The Beat Within greatefully acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs–California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Christensen Fund, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, Morris Stulsaft Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, S. H. Cowell Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Foundation, Shinnyo-en Foundation, W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation, Stone Circles Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, The California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/Rembe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, the Zellerbach Family Fund and individual donors.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidence Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Walden House, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, EPA Charter, RAP High School, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden TREWTH in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

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PIECES OF THE WEEK

Not Gaining Anything Good

Been here for a month and half in the new hall. The new hall has changed my life. Not only in the present life, but also my future. Almost 18 and trying to get a high school diploma. Tried getting released on all three court dates and got rejected.

Each day I spend in here is making things worse for me, and my future. I'm not gaining anything good, but making my criminal records bigger. I messed up my first semester. But I'm still planning on graduating at my current high school. Just need to make up a semester. I could be spending a semester in college, instead of being a 12th grader again with some younger people.

I already had fun in the past and now it's time to move on. Time to make a living and make my mom and dad proud of me. I'm glad my family gave me another chance to improve my life. My brother told me that when we get locked up, we nothing but a caged up dog, and have to obey what they say to you when you've been told. Once I heard that over the phone, I looked around and everything he told me was true.

Love my family 'till the day I die. Can't live without them. Homies aren't going to bail you out, so who you going to call? Of course, yo' momma! Once you have another chance for freedom, don't take it for granted. If you do, welcome back to your cage, DAWG! I'm out, peace!

-Monkey U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You know what you want and sound focused on what matters most in your life. Remember that the schoolwork you do there also counts towards your graduation — and that you don't have to wait for a classroom to educate yourself by reading whatever you can. By recognizing that family is what counts, and that you owe them some sacrifices for all they've sacrificed for you, it tells us that you are making that difficult transition from boy to man. Your future is what you make of it. Use your past as a learning and motivational experience. We hope you keep this fine piece taped to your bedroom mirror so you will always remember what you wrote. When you're out, you'll be tempted to do the things that led you here before, but if you read your own words (every morning), you won't forget. We think you're on a path to a better future. Don't let your family — or yourself — down.

I already had fun in the past and now it's time to move on.

Loneliness

What's good Beat? This is 'Lil Huero writing once again. I'm just posted right here in the unit at Santa Cruz County Juvenile Facility.

Well, moving forward I would like to write about loneliness. My reason for this topic, if you don't know, is that I have been lonely for the past eleven months. It may not sound like much, but believe me, it is.

The time that feels most lonely to me is when I'm in court. When I'm there I see everybody's families, but mine is nowhere in sight. I feel like I have no support. I know I do, but that's just the way I feel.

Another time when I feel lonely is when I'm on lock down. Not only am I lonely, but helpless, especially when I get word of something bad that's happened to my family or friends. I am left alone in a cell to deal with it, and I'm completely helpless.

Just being here is lonely. But during my stay here, I have learned to accept it, and I strive for better. Alrato.

-Jesse, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: And, you're learning how to put your feelings into words. As the great Antonio Porchia said, writing in Spanish: Has venido a este mundo que no entiende nada sin palabras, casi sin palabras. (This world understands nothing but words, and you have come into it with almost none.) You are finding your voice Jesse. You have much to say.

What I Want People To Know...

When it's my time to go, I want people to remember how good of a person I was. I want them to share fun memories of me with the people at my funeral. Although I don't want to die and scared to, I want people to keep me in their hearts when I do.

I know for a fact, lots of people will mourn for my death when it's my time, but I have no idea who will be faking it, or people who don't even show up. I never thought about the subject, but now that I have, I feel like I shouldn't do anything to harm anyone, or hurt them. So people would remember me as a nice, caring guy.

-Lawrence U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This was a deep topic and a deep response. We're glad that you took it seriously, and that it opened your mind. If you begin to live by the code you express here, the code that stands at the heart of every major religion in the world not to harm others (or yourself), then people won't have to wait until you pass to see what a good person you are. They will know it now when you are still very much alive. What you do from here on out will say everything about your character.

A Day To Honor My Family

If there's anyone I would like to create a holiday for, it would be for my mom. When she showed up to juvy today, it made my eyes water because I've never been so scared in my life, and I've never needed my mom more. It meant so much for her to come and visit me, it totally made my day. It felt so good when my mom told me that my dad and her would take care of everything, and that I didn't need to worry.

She also told me my brother called and said he wanted to come home and visit me, because he was so worried about me. That made me feel like my family really cared a lot about me. When I get out of here, I'm going to take my moms advice and do good in school, and not get in trouble at all. I now realize my mom only wanted the best for me, and all along she just wanted me to be happy and safe from harms way.

-Lawrence U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Despite your current situation, a lot of good can, and has, come from it. You now know who truly is in your corner when you need them most. Now it's your turn to be in their corner. Not everyone has such a loving family, so you must take this is a blessing, and honor them. It's much easier to say these things when you're locked up than to do these things when you are free to make your own choices, so we hope you take this wonderful tribute to your wonderful family and tape it up in your bedroom at home, so you can read it every day, and remind yourself what you are risking when you allow yourself to be taken from them. Before you tape it on your mirror, though, let your entire family read it. It will bring tears to their eyes, just as it has brought tears to our eyes.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

I Would Like To Forget

I would like to forget some of the things I found out about my mom
I would like to forget what happened to my mom
I would like to forget the name of the guy who killed my mom
I would like to forget where the guy who killed my mom works
I would like to forget the face of the guy who killed my mom
I would like to forget all of this, because it's been nine years, almost ten
And any time I hear about moms
Or even think about it
It still makes me cry
I see kids who don't give a shhh about their families
But they really don't realize how lucky they are
I think they should cherish their parents
Because people don't know how quickly you can lose them
I didn't even get to know my mama
I was three when she died

-Baby G, Marin

From The Beat: We are very sorry for the life you've lived ever since the loss of your mother. It must be hard to live with these thoughts battling in your head. You totally have our hearts about your mom. Do you think losing your mother has affected you in any way that influences you to do whatever it is that has brought you into juvy? Unfortunately, there isn't anything you can do to bring your mother back. Now, you need to realize that you have a life to confront, to live and to enjoy. Life doesn't end in this place. It continues, and you should as well. One day, you will be a mother like the one you lost. Think about that. Keep teaching and helping all of us readers understand.

Forgetful By Choice

Forgetting is something I think is a matter of decision. To me you only forget the things that should be forgotten, because you'll remember really important things or dates that occurred in your life time, things like your first love, your most embarrassing moment, losing your virginity! I can be a very forgetful person at times, but I remember things that mean so much to me or have a great impact on my life.

Something I'll never forget, is the day that my mother brought me into this world. The reason why I say this day, and not my first day in the Hall, is because if it wasn't for that nice, beautiful, blessed day in June, there would be no me. Without a "me" in this world, I would've never helped people accomplish the things they've done accomplished, and I would never have accomplished the things I've done accomplished to make me and my family proud.

The things I tend to forget, are the things that are usually not worth remembering, because I don't want to remember things that'll hurt me or cause me pain. I'm strong-minded, but there is one thing I want to forget and remember: It is my friend's death. That's the thing I want to remember — but what I want to forget is watching him take his last breath.

-Doug-e-fresh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Phew! Man, we have to catch our breath after you smash us with that last sentence, 'cause there it is — what love wants to remember and what love wants to forget. There was a famous philosopher, Nietzche, who wrote about mental power and who extolled the power of choosing to forget. We only bring him up to say, you're taking us deep in this short piece. But now, there is a greater strength , we believe that chooses not to forget the pain — so we can commit ourselves heart and soul to reducing the chances of it ever happening again to another partner or another friend. We're assuming your friend got shot to death — did he? Revenge just brings more killing and more dying. So it comes down to a simple choice we hope you will always remember: You can be part of the problem or you can be part of the solution. The Beat Within is determined to be part of the solution, but not all of our writers feel it. Do you? Another way to put it is: Live in the solution not the problem. Yeah, you might still get killed — no one is promised tomorrow — but you live as (what you do in your life is) part of the solution. And a benefit on the side is you will no longer be coming to penal institutions!

All About My Father

He abandoned me when I was little, but he left me with a few memories to remember him by. I remember one time when I was just two or three, I was in my brother's room looking at this funny picture he had hung up in his room. Everything seemed so bright and powerful to me as I kept staring at the funny power ranger picture taped up to the wall, and then I heard some strange noises.

I wanted to go see what the noise was, but the picture distracted me, so I ignored the sound and continued staring at the picture. The noise grew louder and louder, then BAP!!! That sound snapped me out of my trance. I was curious of what the noise was so I started walking towards my mom's room, down the hallway.

The more I walked the louder the sound got. I reached the end of the hallway and stood in front of my parents' room, the door was closed, slowly I reached out to the doorknob and turned it, opening the door. Then in a blink of an eye everything seemed dark and be gloomy. I saw blood on the floor and my mom on the ground. He was stomping on her, beating her. She looked like one of my toys I stopped playing with, lifeless.

I tried to stop him, but I couldn't. I just stood at the bed and absorbed everything in, so much pain in my mother's eyes. I didn't know what to do so I just cried right by her side.

-Lil' Vietnamese, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece brought tears to our eyes for two reasons: One because you and your mother had to experience so much pain and two because you brought all your craft and talent and skill as a writer to paint this picture of your past. With lines like "She looked like one of my toys I stopped playing with" and "that sound snapped me out of my trance." You've taken the mud of this unhappy memory and used your artist's alchemy to transform it into gold. What happened next? How long did it take before your father left? How do you think seeing this violence so early in your young life affected you later on?

What They Don't Know

Well, I've been at this place for ten and a half months now and I finally have a trial date coming up in a couple of months. But my reason for writing today is 'cause I'm interested in the topic: One Thing They Don't Know About Me.

Well, one thing is when people look at me they see a gangster, thug, or an animal. It's because of the way I dress, or look at people, and sometimes it's because of my attitude. And because of this they want me locked up and put away from the general population. They have me, the animal, locked in my cage because they think if they give me enough freedom, I'll mess up.

Even in this place, where other animals are housed, they tell me that it would be good if I came out of my cage alone because they think I become a problem when around other animals. But what they don't know is I'm really a nice guy with a big heart for my loved ones. Don't get me wrong – I don't just give my trust and love to anyone. But I take care of my own and I'll always be there for my homies and my familia. They can count on me because my love, trust, loyalty and respect will never fail.

So I think I'm a really nice guy except when people get on my bad side. That's when the animal tends to take over. Just don't disrespect me, my familia, or my homies, and we'll be cool.

Well, it's time for this animal to end this piece – with love, honor, loyalty and respect. Alrato.

-Jesse, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Well, we know that you're a pretty nice guy and that you're becoming a pretty good writer. Practice both things – being a nice guy and writing. It will add up to a life you can hardly imagine right now. It will add up to a good life.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

I Taught My Children Well

When I go, I want people to know that I was a good father to my children and taught them to obey their elders. I also want people to know how smart and intelligent I've been all my life. I want to be known as a young black man, following his dreams.

I don't want people thinking that I was a young black man, always going to juvenile hall, setting a bad example for other kids younger than me, like my nephews and nieces.

-Gregory U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We have read so much lazy nonsense in this unit, that it is a pleasure to finally come to someone who takes The Beat — and his life — seriously. Like all of us, Gregory, you will be remembered not by the words you write, but by the deeds you do. Be the example your young nephews and nieces need, and you will be remembered for generations to come. Thank you for this.

I Chose The Hard Life

What I want people to know about me is that when your time comes to choose between a regular life and a hard life, which one would it be? Myself, I chose the hard life and I started to learn about the mistakes that I did when I was into the street life. So if you chose the hard life, you're going to learn about what you did in those streets and the people you hurt.

It will come to you one day in your life. You will regret what you did and especially when you go to juvenile hall. You will be praying to God that you wish you didn't do those brutal things to those people, because the devil will always try to make things harder than they are. Juvenile Hall is the devil's main playground. That's when he gets in your head, wanting to make you commit suicide on your life. He wants your future to be miserable.

So my advice to you is just to not go for the bad things in life. You choose who you want to be, not someone from the streets, yourself. You make it to where you want to be.

-Octavio U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're thinking, Octavio, and we admire you for it. So many of the young people you are locked up with haven't begun that process. But thinking is a process, not a product. It's ongoing, so how you think today will not be the same as how you think tomorrow. That's why suicide is a bad option. It freezes life in this moment, making sure you will never see the changes that are already happening to you. The bad things you have done cannot be undone. But by regretting them, and seriously thinking about how to live your life in the way that helps you and your family and hurts no one else, you can use those regrets to change yourself and your world. You are on your way to becoming a teacher. Keep thinking, and keep writing.

Life is Short: RIP Teddy

Something I will never forget. I will never forget the day my friend Teddy got killed, it seems that life is short because that day we talked all day. It was the first day he ever came on that block.

I got waked up to someone telling me some boy is dead at five in the morning. I went outside and saw my friend lying on the ground, shot three times in the chest.

It's a trip. Just that day he was alive, the next he was gone! That's messed up. I'm out Beat.

-White Boy Kev, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Now we'll never forget about it either, because this tragic story is on our memory like tattoos on skin. The number of young people dying seems to go up each year, and for every one that gets killed there's ten like you – people who have to suffer the loss of a friend, people who have to try to make sense of another senseless death. What did you do to work through it. What kind of effect do you think Teddy's death had on you, and all the other stuff you ended up getting caught up in?

Addicted To The Money Game

Money makes people do different things. It could make people do the right thing or the wrong thing. What I think about money is that it gets underneath yo' skin and deep inside yo' mind and thoughts.

I started off with no money. I had to do what I had to do to get a lil' money here and there. Money made me happy. I could do more things with money in my pocket. Sometimes, I would do the right thing to get money, but mainly, I did the wrong thing. But I really didn't give a damn as long as I had that dough.

After a while, people started callin' me Cash. I was hittin' licks e'ery day. That money was always on my mind. It felt like I needed that shhh to live.

I spent most of it on dumb stuff, doin' it big every day, havin' fun. After a minute, I started doin' dumb shhh, bein' hot as shhh with all that I did, but I didn't care. I knew I was gonna get caught sooner or later, but I kept on doin' the same thang. I hit that last lick somewhere I never would do it. I knew it was hot, but I did it anyway and got caught.

Now, as I be sittin' in my room thinkin', I still got that green in my mind, but I'm thinkin' smarter, steppin' my money game up. Young Cash gonna be on dem streets again, soon.

-Cash U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What this fine description of how money can take over your life made us think about was drug addiction. If you substitute "meth" or "crack" for the word "money," you could be telling the story of any drug that begins to take over your every waking thought. You think about it when you have it, and you think about getting when you don't have it. Finally, it so controls your life that you don't think you can live without it, and you are no longer the master of your own actions. And, like so many drug and alcohol addicted people we have known over the years, your addiction makes you think you can do it better, that you can be in control again, rather than recognizing that you suffer from a sickness which, if untreated, will lead you right back to where you sit today. Read again what you have written, and try to connect the dots between the life you chose out there and the life you don't choose in here. If you go back to that life, no mater how slick you think you've become, you future is as predictable as an alcoholic's future, and it's not one you're going to like.

I knew I was gonna get caught sooner or later, but I kept on doin' the same thang.

Native American Day

Look, we have Cinco De Mayo, the Fourth of July, and Black history month. Why can't there be a holiday or a Native American day/month?

I'm half Native American, and we/us/my family, my tribe — it is a beautiful thing. Just think pow-wows, the food, the people, the way we live, our culture. Can't you just see it, the pow-wows and the clothes? The feathers? We wear the leather in our moccasins.

-Pomo, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: This is an excellent question. Since Native Americans were here before anyone, and since their people were decimated by the European conquerors, we think it's high time that they were honored with a day, week, month or year! We wish only that you would have given us more details about the pow-wows, the food, the costumes, the dances, the culture, so we could enjoy the word pictures you paint.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

The Demon's Shadow

I have been incarcerated for so long
That I feel the demon's shadow over my head where it don't belong.
This heartless world got my heart turnin' cold
Turnin' my head where to turn
I'm stuck in a hellhole to feel the burn
Where they turn off the light I'm there in the dark
Feelin' the demons reachin' to take over my heart
But that's just the start
The tears in my eyes don't ever stop
It's around two a-m and I have just woken up from a bad dream
I'm afraid to go to sleep 'cause killin'
And blood drippin' out the sky, what I had I just seen.
Picture you in my position
Pain and misery is not my only situation
And this is just the beginning of my session
I'm getting closer and closer towards the edge
If I don't get out soon I'm gonna be in the death stage
Misery all I see: That's my main state
Sometimes at night I feel the demons hand in my brain
Tellin' me to bow towards him cause he take away the pain.
I'm half dead already, you can tell by my dark rhymes
I'm having visions of my enemies walkin' corpses
I'm ready to go in a deep sleep so I don't have to go to court
Everyone's dyin' to live, me I'm livin' to die
I been here so long that my heart is turnin' into a real stone

Yes, I might be a sinna, but the system
Is turnin' me into a real killa
It hurts to know you are all alone, away from home
In my heart all I feel is pain and my sins swirl
'Cause the demon's shadow has taken over my world.

-Rahimi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Rahimi, we told you once you were a real poet, and this just proves it. These images are terrifying, and full of despair, as if you'd taken a picture of a dark haunted house and breathed life into then took us by the hand and said "come on, let me give you a tour of the haunted house of my mind." But you know what, reading the poem doesn't fill us with despair at all, because we can see that by writing your feelings down, by putting them on paper, you took some of that pain and put it on paper where it belongs. We know it's a hard struggle (we know you ran from camp since writing this) but man, re-read this poem right here: Your wisdom is savage, your voice is powerful, you have everything it takes to beat these demons back. Tell us how.

When It's My Time To Go

When it's my time to go, I would want my mom to know I love her; that all the trouble I got into, I never meant to bring her into and hurt her; that I was sorry for making my mom look bad in court when the DA told the judge that I shouldn't go home because I'm a danger to society. Having her feel bad about herself, thinking she did something wrong. Wondering why, out of all her kids, I couldn't be a good one like the rest of her kids.

I would want my brothers and sister to know that they mean everything to me, even though I would tell them that they was just adopted and not my real family. Tell my friends on the block that they just like family to me, and I love them too. Tell everybody that know me and the ones who know of me, that I ain't no thug, no gangsta, none of that. Just a young soldier tryna survive and adapt to my environment. And to my dad, let him know I listened to every word he ever told me and wanted to be just like him.

-Stu U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You don't have to wait until it's your time to go to show (not tell) your mom everything you've written in this touching tribute to a loving mother. Of course you didn't mean to hurt her, but you did hurt her, and now you have a chance to make up for that hurt by living in a different way. All the words of love in the world don't count if your actions continue to bring pain to this person who has sacrificed so much for you. If you match your deeds to your words, not only will you be showing your mother how much you love her, but in the process, you will also feel a lot better about yourself.

Since my mom died, I've been struggling in and out of juvenile hall, and it seems like the only person who is by my side regardless of what I do, is my auntie.

People I Will Never Forget

One thing I know is that I will never forget my mom. She brought me in this world and taught me a lot. She taught me how to be myself and never stop speaking my mind. I will also never forget my auntie. Since my mom died, I've been struggling in and out of juvenile hall, and it seems like the only person who is by my side regardless of what I do, is my auntie. She really cares about me and that is what I will never forget about her.

Someone else that I will never forget is my little cousin Zion aka Z-man. Now this little ninja brings happiness into my life, no matter how I feel. Z-man, you're goin' to be a wise man when you grow up. Don't let anybody tell you different. You too, KK.

These are people I will never forget. I love all of them. They give purpose to my life.

RIP Ma. Life is movin' slow without you. See you later on in life.

-Cuba U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There is something so loving about your words. You are more than lucky to have had (and continue to have) such supportive and loving people in your life — and they are very lucky to have you, because you recognize what they have given you. There is no reason why your little cousin should be the only one who will be "a wise man" when he grows up. You are showing us your own wisdom in your words, and now must demonstrate your wisdom in your deeds. Think of your life as a moving picture and not a snapshot. You are locked up at this moment (and you must learn whatever lessons you can from this experience), but your future is not yet told. Make your mother proud of you from heaven, and your auntie and cousin proud of you on earth for the changes you make in your life, and the good you do. They are not the only ones who will be proud of you. You will be proud of yourself.

When It's My Time To Go

Man, what's up with the Beat ? When it's my time to go, I just want people to know who I am. Like something good 'cause if one day I pass my name to my son, I don't want him to get older and people like, "Oh, that's Daddy-O's son, let's get 'im," or saying, "I'm glad he gone."

I want people to say he was a good man, not people saying he was a bad-ass in them streets. I want people to say, "He straightened up his life, and now he doin' good." Because all people make bad choices. So that's how I want people to look at me! "When it's my time to go."

-D U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're right. Humans — all of us — make mistakes. Some people learn from their mistakes, others refuse to. You are one of the fortunate people because you are learning, which means that you won't make those mistakes again (or, at least, you'll try not to). Like all of us, you will be known in life and remembered in death for what you do. So it is nice to read that you intend to do good and leave a legacy of good memories for the children you bring into the world and for the family you already have.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

RIP A.J, 1981-2004

I will never forget the day my big brother passed away April 17, 2004. My brother A.J was the best brother anybody could ever have. He always looked out for me when I was in a jam, and he always made sure I had everything I needed.

When I was growing up, my brother was like a father figure to me. He always told me when I grow up and have kids he would be right by my side to help me be a good father because he did not want me to be like our dad.

-Lil' Bishop U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a very loving tribute to a brother who clearly loved you very much. As tragic as your loss is, you were lucky to have such a brother. Now, how will you live your life so that you give him the maximum respect possible? He wanted you to grow up and have a family, and to be a good father. Will you be able to do that if you allow the system to take you from those you love and put you behind walls? Wouldn't he want you to get your education, to treat other people decently, and to prepare in the best way you know how to become a responsible young adult? Can you give him what he wanted for you?

That's It

I don't know why people celebrate Thanksgiving. America was given great hospitality by the Native Americans, but shortly after the Americans played the hell out of them. I don't know why people always want to buy presents to each other on Christmas. They worry more about what will be the right present rather than just enjoying being with the people you love.

I wonder why nobody really cares about global warming if it's inevitable in our future. I bet in fifty years from now when all life on earth starts to become mutated and twisted, people will start to cry about it, and say, "Oh my god. We should've this, we should've that." And you know what I'ma do? I'ma laugh at all those dumb suckers who never cared before.

That's one thing that gets me hella mad, when people try to take advantage and it comes back and bites them in the ass, they wanna complain! I wonder why they debate so much about weather they want to give a youth a life sentence or the death penalty. I wonder why Arizona waited so long to make Martin Luther King's birthday a holiday. I wonder why they want to send my mom back to El Salvador when she's been steady livin' in this sick-ass country for 20 years. How they want to send my dad back because he's an immigrant, but he's been workin' in here for over 17-18 years or more, and responsible too. He doesn't ever miss his work.

So if they do get sent back, what the hell am I supposed to do here? Oh shhh! I'm guessin' they want to send me back too, even though I was born here.

Time is up and I gotta go, but I ain't takin' this shhh no more, I hope people will realize soon enough that we need to do somethin' about all this bs that goin' on before it's too late, before people end up laughin' in our faces because we were too stupid to do somethin' now.

-Meen U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We think people make such a deal about Thanksgiving and Christmas (and Valentine's Day and Easter and...) because companies make a lot of money on those days, and they advertise for weeks, so people follow. Of course, having a warm meal with family at home is a wonderful thing — whether it's one of those holidays or not. We're not sure if answering these questions is even as important as asking them — and we wonder why more people (both young and old) don't ask more questions like this. Are your parents facing deportation to El Salvador? We sure hope not. But if you were born here, then you are a citizen, and you cannot be deported anywhere. They can lock you up (as you've discovered), but you'll always be an American citizen.

You Have To Do It

Some claim to be hard
some claim they kill
But none do it on their own free will
These are not the things you do because it's what you like
You have to do it because it's your life
Growing up without a daddy or an addict as a momma
When you grow up in a lifestyle of your own nothing but drama
Because the only family you have is the block
So growin' up, yo' only friends are the rocks and glocks
Bein 'the laughingstock of the neighborhood
So I'm gonna get rich and wish they would
So I can say back then that they didn't want me
Now I'm hot, they all on me.
So don't do it 'cause it's what you see
Be cool stay in school please just for me

-Lil' Richmond, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When we read this it's hard to believe it was written by someone in his teens... it's so wise, so mature, and one thing for sure – it's knowledge the rest of the world should hear, so they understand how many so-called criminals are just trying to survive the only way they know how. Is this what you saw, or what you lived? See, we believe that there are lots of other options out there, but you have to go out and seek them. You have to ask teachers to help you make it. You have to tell your PO: "I want a tutor, I want a program, I want help studying." Because there are so many programs to help young people get their lives straight: The Mentoring Center, The Omega Boys Club, Youth Alive, Youth Radio,... the list goes on and on. Are you willing to make that change and take that chance?

Do Your Best To Stay Out

When it's my time to go, I'ma write about my life and future. Man, you gotta do yo' best to stay out the system. I know it's hard, but go to schoo'. It's not hard at all.

Forget smokin'. You can do that after schoo' or not at all. Fa real, some people family don't like you smokin'. But stay in schoo'. That's all family want from you, man. It's important. Forget hustlin'; don't do that. All people watchin' you and they all got see to tell. So schoo' is the best, and that fa real.

-Neily U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree with you, the best strategy for success is to finish school. Why do you think families want their children to get an education? Without it, you will later find just how important it is to your future, and just how much harder it is to make up for what you didn't learn. Will you follow your own advice when you get out of here? We sure hope so. (From now on, if you don't include your name on your piece, we won't be able to publish it in The Beat.)

you better be careful who you try to fit in with!

This Loneliness

I don't know what that really is.
I've been locked up for a long time,
but I still don't know what it is.
I miss my family, but it is no use.
I won't be out for a long time.
So why miss when I can't do anything about it.
But I don't trip. One day I will be out.
Don't know what I am going to do
but I will hope for the best and expect the worst.
I don't know when I'll be out – 15, 20 years later – but I will be out.
So I tell you one thing, all you people out there and those in here
who are getting out: Don't be stupid, don't think you are all bad,
porque you aren't - especially when you are in here.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We don't have any easy solutions for you Uriel, but we do want to say how impressed we are that you've been able to turn your quiet acceptance into words and poems. We're so amazed that you've practically taught yourself how to read and write in English. Wherever you are, we hope you'll grace the pages of The Beat with your thoughts.

Another Day Closer to Death

i feel like i ain't got nothin' left
every morning i wake up, i feel
like i'm just another day closer to death
i can't decide which direction to go
should i live life fast or live life slow
being successful isn't in my vocabulary
i've been to more cemeteries than libraries
brah, what you see through my eyes is scary
time is slippin' away from me while death is chasin' me
for most of my teenage years, i've been locked behind walls
sometimes i wonder if i lost it all
seems like whenever i try to stand, i fall
now i'm doing dead time, all because i wanted to ball
but i'll be waitin' 'till death call

-Lil' D-tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's time for a change, and you know it in your heart if not in your brain. Forget about the long, slow road to success. Thinking that way just brings on stress and makes you feel depressed. But you do need to slow your role, take it day by day and take it slow. This fast track just brings you back here fast, and that high life doesn't last but a minute before you're looking forward to writing for The Beat and seeing your words back up in it. Well, why not change your life style and write The Beat from the outside? Don't take a stand, especially not posted up on the block, just start talkin' the talk that points away from these locked gates and keep walkin' slowly day by day till right choices become a habit that get you paid while they keep you free, instead of being enslaved to a past that keeps you awaiting death's blast.

i can't decide which direction to go
should i live life fast or live life slow
being successful isn't in my vocabulary
i've been to more cemeteries than libraries

Why Fit In?

Somehow, but in a funny way, I can say, "Yeah, the Hall helped me out a lot." But more so it got me to understand a lot of things I didn't understand about myself, like why I did the things I did and why was I the way I was, comin' from the family I come from.

Like most others that are just trying to fit in, even maybe not so much trying to fit in but to be a part of something. Me, I don't like to fit in. I like to be the odd duckling, because when you stick out like a sore thumb, you never know what's in store for you or the people around you, which puts you in the middle of whatever's in store for them.

So for all y'all out there tryin' to fit in, you better be careful who you try to fit in with! Because life is precious, too precious to waste on some fools that's not going to think twice about you when you've gone. Fit in with that!

-Donald, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You come hard and strong with the truth as you see it, and we can feel how you've learned something about yourself, something deep that you are trying to share with others if they're willing to look deep into themselves and what they're doing without really trying to figure it out. Now that you've come this far, we hope you take it all the way to — quit and go legit. 'Cause while you learned a lot during this time, you don't need to do any more time for committing crimes. Get a legal j-o-b and after your release — stay free! (And get that high school degree!) Thanks for a terrific piece.

My Sister

Well, a person that I'm close too is my sister.
She is the only one that takes care of me and my siblings.
She's like my mom because she's taken care of me since I was little.
But I also struggle to find common ground with her
because she wants me to stop
what I'm doing and not get into trouble.
But it's a little too late, because I'm already locked up for murder charges
that will have me locked up for a long time.
But she still always asks me to change.
I tell her I'll try,
but this is the way I live, and it's kind of hard to change
the way I've been living since I was little.
I still love my sister anyways and love her to death.
But I'm still in that 'can't stop' mentality. It's hard to change.
To all locked down – stay up.

-Indio, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: It sounds to us that your sister only wants what's best for you. She's been right all along, hasn't she? You'll get out one day and get a chance to do it right. But you'll need to spend the time coming up in a constructive way. We know that you are a very smart guy. You've written some fine poems for The Beat. Read your tail off. Take some college courses while you're locked up. You've been given a good brain. Now put it to use. That's really what your sister wants for you – that you use your natural gifts. Make her proud. Make yourself proud.

Forgetful

We say we forget
It's done ,get over it

But these things I can't seem to remember
Are often things
From which I don't get
--Benefits

We forget out court dates
But remember the ninjas we hate

Can't' recall robbing the white boy at the mall
And can't forget my sentence to the hall
His shortcoming's I forgot got
Yet my mind my time reserved a spot

When you only forget the shhh that don't please ya

It's not that you're forgetting
But you have the disorder
Called:
Selective amnesia

-Jj, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This may be the best rhyme you've hit us with so far (and that's saying a lot!). We loved the way it's fun and makes you laugh, like a punchline to a joke, but then there's also that serious side too. Like if everyone remembered, really remembered, how lonely it can get in Juvenile Hall, would they ever come back? Probably not.

This Love

When it's my time to go I just want my mom, dad and my girl to know that I love them and all the stuff in my life was for them. I don't want them to think that I was the greatest hustler but I want them to know that I did my best at it.

When I have kids I want them to know that I love them more than anything in the world and that the bad things I did in the streets were so that they wouldn't have to.

I want my family to know that I was intelligent and that I did want to change my life sooner or later.

And I just want to say RIP Drew. We miss you and also too Lil' Glen and Mike and all the other fallen soldiers, we miss and love you.

I hope I live to accomplish my dream to become a rapper.

-Mike Jr.

From The Beat: We can tell you're intelligent and we're sure your family knows the same—intelligent enough not to wait around until it's too late to make the changes you mention in your piece. We know that it's not easy but we also know that you can do it if you put your mind and heart to it.

I Got Faith

The thing I won't forget is being in jail for a murder that I didn't do. I got faith in God that they let me go and find the right person. I want people to know that God is real and He can work magic. I know He gon' get me out of this messed up position, and I know a lot of people that go down say that they didn't do it, but between me and the Man upstairs, He know it.

I just hope when they let me go they find the right person 'cause me being locked up ain't gon' do. I ain't used to bein' down. I don't deserve this.

-Lil' Dro, 150 Crew

From The Beat: No matter what the courts decide you will always know the truth inside your heart about what happened, and like you say here, your faith and belief will help you through it. In the meantime though, we hope you have a good lawyer and the love and support of your family. You know already that you have our support.

The Best

When I die I want people to know that I was the best hustler of all time and if I don't die with kids I want them to know that I wanted to be the best father alive and I love kids. I also want people to know that I wanted to be a role model to the next generation and let them know life is not about robbing, smoking and drinking, it's about making it somewhere in life.

-Rodnelle

From The Beat: We like what you say about making it somewhere in life but would just like to add that that "somewhere" is different for everyone—there is no one gage to measure success by—but that the way in which you get there is all important and will affect the degree of happiness and satisfaction you have when you get there.

Life

The streets is hard when you not concentrating
You got to be up on game when you have an awakening
Where you out there, there no playing around, Baby Girl
It's about money and getting down
It's hard times and struggles you have to face
But you say forget it to the police, 'cause they fake
They rather see you in jail, 'cause Black women are getting raped
Having babies at age sixteen, 'cause they can't wait
Lil' mama on the side, shaking her ass
For a little cash
'Cause the ninjas told her she was fly
Now she messing with a scrub
He call himself a laid-back pimp
He got this girl and that girl, too
But he don't give a damn
As long as the money coming through
He has you out all night, probably all day
He beat yo' ass if you don't pay
The struggles get harder, each and every day

-Desiree, Marin

From The Beat: The streets you describe seem bleak and dangerous. How did you get involved in this dark side? What did your family do wrong? What will you do differently for your child? Tell us readers what you've already learned from the streets, and how would you advise young women to protect themselves from men like this? Please if you have a way out, help us readers out! If you need help, let us know!

My Son Unforgettable

Something that I would never forget is the birth of my son. November, 16, 2006, 9:31am. UCSF hospital 15th floor. I remember that day like it was yesterday. It makes me proud to be a father, but in a way I feel ashamed because I'm not there.

That was one of the nastiest things you can watch, but for some reason I was still happy. I cut the umbilical cord too. I didn't even leave the hospital at all. I slept in the room wit' my girl. She got the bed and I got the chair. The baby was in a lil' basinet with us in the room. We were there for two nights.

We had plenty of family members visiting. Even my homies came. I had to sneak out of the room to go outside and smoke a cigarette wit' my homeboys.

I felt proud and I am always goin to be proud of my son. Me and my girl are very lucky for all the love and support our families be givin' us and our baby.

Even though I'm locked up my mom be bringin the baby every Sunday. The birth of my son, to me, is unforgettable.

-Lazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The birth of your child is probably the single most momentous event in your life, so we're very glad that you honor the importance of that. It means you have your priorities straight...for the most part. What we have to ask, is if you are such a committed father and boyfriend and you have so much family support, why are you locked up? Perhaps it was something out of your control, or perhaps it's just easier to tell yourself that. When you dig deep, what is the answer? Are you a man who puts his family first or are you a boy who puts himself first?

At The Ranch

TBW: What do you feel like being interviewed about today, D Grinda?
DG: About my 'hood. My other name is Hoodfastic.
TBW: What does Hoodfastic mean?
DG: It means I'm from the 'hood and I'm fantastic and I do what I do well. I'm a star on the set and I'm not talkin' no movies. I'm talkin' about my block.
TBW: Well, you already know you can't just bla bla bla about how fine you are and how great your 'hood is, but if you have learned anything from living in your 'hood that you can teach others who have never been there or what it's like to live there, go ahead.
DG: Yeah. Good.
TBW: What's your neighborhood like?
DG: It's some cold-hearted people, but some talented people. It's a lot of mishap goin' on right now, and people, everybody confused, but everybody knows what's goin' on and they know what's goin' down and what's gonna go down.
TBW: In what way are people where you live cold-hearted?
DG: People think their heart is in their chest, but when drama go down, their heart is in their belly. I mean, you feel me? They fear, they scared, they don't know what to do, so they panic, they just do anything, something out of the ordinary that will affect their lives.
TBW: Can you explain more about what you mean?
DG: What they do causes their death, other people's lives, their pockets, their reputations on the streets.
TBW: Can you tell us more?
DG: Say somebody is hustlin' on your block and that person wasn't from your block, so you affecting that man's pockets that is from my block, and so that's affecting they life and if I let that man continue doin' what he doin', that gonna affect my reputation.
TBW: Tell us about the talented people in your neighborhood.
DG: We got some hustlinaires in the 'hood. We got some rap stars, we got some block stars, and more.
TBW: Can you tell us specifically about your stars? Who's there? Tell us about their talent.
DG: We got Jay T, Vallejo, Telly Mac, Black Reese—these are all rappers. We got the True-Stack Family Entertainment, including me. That's my record company. Two Thumbs Down Entertainment, part of the Get Low Players.
TBW: What do you rap about?
DG: I rap about everything, man. I spread love. I do what I can to get where I need to be. I rap about money, my community, my homies that's gone—Dante White, Slim Thug, CJ. I rap about the police, my childhood as an adolescent, being institutionalized, street life—that's about it. I rap about my block.
TBW: What kind of mishap is going on in your 'hood?
DG: Fillmore is just discombobulated right now, but we still active. People have died, people's families are hurtin', so you get back at the individuals who caused those people to die and help those who were supposed to do to keep their own lives.
TBW: So you're talking about revenge?
DG: Yes. It's genocidal on the set.
TBW: That's tragic, don't you think?
DG: Only on the weekends.
TBW: Only on the weekends? Why isn't it tragic when someone gets shot on a Tuesday?
DG: Because the youngstas decide on lives nowdays. It ain't too much discipline out on the sets nowdays. All it is, is bullets flyin' around nowdays.
TBW: What kind of gun shoots those bullets?
DG: A 357 magnum, mini AKs shoot 'em.
TBW: Why is murder so prevalent where you live?
DG: I'm gonna tell you straight up, man. People ain't playin' their position and doin' what they're supposed do do. If you hangin', you bangin'. It's blood in, no way out. If you commit yourself to somethin' and you represent yourself to somethin' on a daily basis, you should make sure what you're reppin is something that represents you, such as me being from Fillmore. I gotta certain position that I gotta protect. I gotta eat.
TBW: But everybody's gotta eat.
DG: If I don't contribute, you ain't got no swag, no street cred in the 'hood.
TBW: What does protecting your street cred require of you?
DG: You can't even talk about your private life around certain individuals. It's only a selective, certain few that you can trust, that you can dwell with, and them individuals is hand picked at that. You can't tell people your personal life—like if you have a job, where you have a job, where you live, even where you be at, because it's detrimental to your life and others'.
TBW: What others?
DG: It's really gonna be detrimental to the person that's comin' lookin' for you.
TBW: What about girlfriends? If you have a girlfriend, do you have to keep it on the down low because if your enemies know who your girl is, they could think they can get to you through her?
DG: Hell, yes. Girls are gullible and I don't trust 'em anyway.
TBW: Why not?
DG: 'Cause they females and there's no tellin' what they will give up or do to get what they want.
TBW: So they'd tell your business?
DG: Yeah, that's why I tell females what they need to know, not what they want to hear.
TBW: What do they need to know?
DG: They only need to know the basics.
TBW: What would girls want more than your friendship or your love?
DG: Cash money.
TBW: You mean someone would tell your business for some dollas?
DG: Or he (an enemy) might pay her or force her to tell him my business.
TBW: Has that ever happened?
DG: No.
TBW: So why are you afraid it would? That a girl would betray you?
DG: Because it's happened to my homies.
TBW: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about in your interview?
DG: Why don't you ask me why they call me D Grinda?
TBW: All right. Why do they call you D Grinda?
DG: Wow! That's self-explanatory! I stand for my intelligence, I stand for my talent, I stand for my community, I stand for myself and my family. Man, I'm just me.

I'm 'bout to sum this up now, with one more question, because I gotta get back to this pool game. I want the question to be, "What is it you do for Fillmore" and "What do you think Fillmore does for you in return?"
TBW: Okay, good questions, D Grinda. What do you do for your neighborhood and what does it do for you?
DG: I give the 'hood a good show and in return I'm welcomed, but I'm not exempt from an early exit. I could die any day.

-D Grinda LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You recite an informative interview about your neighborhood and yourself. You sound totally adapted to the rules that all of you have formulated where you live. You seem resigned to the life so many of you are living, even though it threatens your life every day. You also seem to exult in that life, even though it so often ends in the tragic death of your youngsters. Aren't you afraid it's just a matter of time that you'll get shot, maybe by someone from your own 'hood? Don't the odds that you can stay alive decrease every day you're in the streets, because it really is as dangerous as you describe? What can you do or what do you do that doesn't threaten or hurt anyone else, to keep yourself safe? Have you given some thought to living a life off the streets, out of jail, and in a productive mind state? Try it! Otherwise the safest place for you is Juvy.

Rest In Peace

Today was an all right day. Time went by fast and I came out for my last rec. of the day. I was watching some DVD called "He Got Game", then the staff turn the movie off but I still had like thirty minutes left so I was talking to my homie then I saw my other homie on the phone so I asked him, do he have a three-way and he said yeah, so I ask can I get a three-way one time. He said it's all good homie, I told him the number to my mom cell phone. Ring, ring, ring.

"Hello," my lil' sister Alyssa answer.

"Hey what's up Alyssa where is mom at? "

"She's right here. Joker died."

"What? (Joker is my uncle's nickname)

"Your uncle, mom's brother."

"Let me talk to mom."

When my mom got on the phone she sounded very upset.

"What happen mom? Joker died?"

"Yeah, I think he passed away Thursday or Friday morning."

In my head I was just thinking of what my uncle looked like and all the times I saw him.

Me: "Are you going to be ok?"

Mom: "Yeah. Tomorrow is his funeral so I'm going to catch a plane in the morning a 9:30 am."

"How did he die?"

"He had a heart attack."

"Sorry mom, well I'm gonna let you go, OK?"

"I'll be back on Wednesday and I'll come visit you next weekend and I'll be at your court date."

"OK mom. I love you."

Rest in peace to my uncle and my homies. One Love

-Lil' Indio, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing this sad story with us. We don't know how old your uncle was, but heart attacks are always sudden and it can be a real shock for the family. We hope your mom is doing alright. It's hard to lose a sibling.

My Chubby Monster

I let you down again, but at least I was there for your first birthday. I know I have to be there for you way more than that, but I've realized that I have more maturing to do.

Coming in here once again taught me that I have no self-discipline, and now I'm here missing you. But I'll be out and there will be better days. I love you, Lon

-Baby Duce U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You know, BD, realizing that you have more maturing to do is a sign of that maturity you're seeking. You may not be there yet, but you're moving in the right direction. We are so sorry that you are not there for your son because he needs you as he grows. We don't think there's anything we can say that you don't already know. Now, you have to match what you know with what you do.

A Witness To Death

I seen my Mexican patna get killed last year. That's something I can't forget. I wasn't scared because that wasn't the first time I witnessed a murder. I been seen ninjas getting killed before, but that was the first time I seen one of my ninjas from school.

-Chris, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That would be something you can't forget. It's shocking and horrible, even if you have seen someone get killed before. That young man lost his life in front of your eyes. We hope that the impact it had on you wasn't all negative, and it inspires you to be less violent or to discourage violence in others. No one should have to dies for some stupid hood beef.

Mom's Tears

The one thing I know I won't forget is being locked up and how my parents come and visit me. My parent was always there for me, but I realize that when I was lock up every time my parent visit me they always talk about how they warn me to stay out of trouble but I never listen to them.

When my mom comes she always cry and drop tears because she hates seeing me locked up. I would sometimes cry after visiting because I would think of my mother's face. I hope I can stop her from crying and stop being sad over me. If I could have that wish come true, I won't wish for nothing else. That's the one thing I won't forget.

My parents were there for me, from the beginning to the end.

-Lil' Mike, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It doesn't have to be a wish. It can be a reality. All they want is for you to stay out of trouble and not get arrested. Is that so hard for you? Or do you only care when they're in front of you crying. When your homies are trying to get you to do thing you shouldn't, are you thinking about how much you don't want to disappoint your parents or how you don't want to seem uncool to your homies? Think of your mom nect time you're about to do something stupid.

Deep Sleep

After you've been through a long day in yo' room and doin' activities in jail, you in yo' room thinking a lot.

Before I came here I didn't even think so hard or read books. Since the first day I stepped foot in my room, I started waking up and realizing that I'm only throwin' my life away slowly. So I finally woke up and said I gotta stop doin' what I was doin'. Finally go to sleep in my bed and start dreaming about bein' on the outs. Finally when I wake up I look around and say, damn I forgot I wasn't at home. That's the worst feeling ever. I miss home!

-Juan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You miss being home, but do you think you'll take your newfound love for reading and thinking home with you? Or will you just keep doing the same old thing? We hope this is your wake up call.

Happy Food

My happy is ice cream. There are so many flavors, I never get tried of it. If I'm upset or mad, ice cream cheers me up, especially when you share it with a girl--wink wink. With ice cream you could make milk shakes, sundaes, etc. I also like ice cream because it's cheap.

All Vietnamese food and Japanese food is my happy food, too. I'm always willing to try more of those foods. They always coming out with sushi--I never try. I eat Vietnamese food almost every day. I go to Little Paris in Chinatown. I always buy a Vietnamese sandwich and their desert--it be cracking. I like it because it's good and cheap, so it help me save money, ya mean?

-Weapon LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What kind of Vietnamese and Japanese foods do you like best? For those of us unfamiliar with these foods, which would you recommend we try first? Can you describe a Vietnamese desert for those of us who have never eaten one?

Before This Hard Life

TBW: Playboy, we know you're excited out of your mind, because by this time next week you'll be home. As much as we'll miss you with all our hearts, we're happy for you and hope you'll do well. We especially hope you'll keep yourself safe. We've always wanted to interview you about your young life back in El Salvador before the gangs. Are you up for that?

P: Sure. Let's go. I was born in El Salvador in 1988. I grew up in San Salvador, the capital. Then my mom came to the US when I was eight months and left be back there (in Salvador,) because she wanted to get a better life for me, so my grandpa and grandma raised me 'til I was five years old. I used to look at them (my grandparents) like parents, but I don't remember, because I was so little, but my grandfather told me. My mother used to come twice a year to visit me, like Christmas.

When I was five years and a half she told me, "Do you want to come with me?" I said, "No," but my grandpa said that there's a better opportunity for me over here and there's a family here (in the US) I didn't know, like my little sister. My pops got killed during the war (in Salvador) when the gangs started.

As soon as the civil war ended, the gangs started, 'cause all these people were poor—they didn't have no jobs—they started robbing people. It takes three more years for me, because she (my mom) has to pay a lawyer over here (in the US) and a lawyer over there in El Salvador. I remember I used to go to my uncle and my older sister to sign papers and take blood tests and put punches (shots) in my arms. My sister, too. It took, like, a year, but what cost my mom a lot was for my mom to get my papers and I didn't want to come, 'cause I know I got uncles, cousins and they my family for my whole life (back in Salvador,) but some of my cousins were the ones who helped create the gang (in San Salvador.)

My tio (uncle) had a soccer team and he used to always take me to the games. I used to always go play soccer—he teached me how to play—my cousins and stuff, so I really grew up in the environment—my friends playing sports, but they also was focused—trying to create the gang.

But then they give me a date to come over here. My momma called me on the phone and I was happy, because I live with my real mom and my little sister. At the same time, my grandma, who was like my mom (to me,) passed away, so I was sad to leave my grampa by himself (back in San Salvador.) So I was kinda confused. But then my mom told me, "You can come for a couple a months and go back if you want to, for a little while."

But I got the picture in my mind--exactly how it happened. All my uncles who started the real gang) and my cousins and friends who lived in my neighborhood in El Salvador—we have this little meeting the day before I left. Me and my cousin, Jacky, we was the ones who started the little gangs—fighting and tagging and stuff—we have real beef with kids from another neighborhood. I remember telling them, "I'm gonna come back." I remember shaking all their hands. We was drinking some beers and stuff. I remember telling my homie, Mando, who was like my cousin, but not my real cousin. I shook his hand. He started crying. I told him I'd be back. Then, when I came over here, six months later, I got a phone call. I found out he got killed. Then I started crying and stuff.

There was this one dude from Nicaragua. He had a house. He used to pay for a room in the house where I lived. He had a refrigerator. He had hella beers in there, 'cause he was an adult. I took a couple beers and started drinking, 'cause I was hella sad. My mom wasn't home. He was hella drunk. He said, "Take a shower before your mom gets home. Get dressed." He told me we was going to this party, so my mom wouldn't see me drunk. He seen me sad. He wanted me to have some fun and some drinks over there. My mother was on his line and my line (got hella mad,) because I was drunk. Then I started crying and I told her about my friend who got killed. Now I'm thinkin' about it because my close cousin—he's gonna come here to live here and now I'm gonna see him older. We remember when we was little—we was playing and fighting and stuff. Now he's gonna be older. The stuff from my past is going to be on my mind.

Then, now it's gonna be different. He's in my gang, but I'm gonna tell him to be cool—get a job. I'm gonna take him with some girls. Then we gonna be soldados together.

-Playboy LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Great story about your childhood, Playboy. Do you ever visit San Salvador and see your relatives and friends any more? Is your grandfather still alive? Do you miss your home country? Have you established a wonderful life for yourself now, in this country? We hope so. Have you ever considered getting yourself a real job, outside the block? Since that's the advice you're giving your play cousin from Salvador, why don't you get some work on the outs yourself, and show him how great it is to have your own money, legitimately earned? Best of luck on the outs. We'll miss you. Keep yourself safe.

Observing My Past Has Helped

What it do? Me, I'm cool. Well, back when I was young, I was abused mentally, sexually, ya name it. I didn't know what was goin' on, but now that I am older and all dat was in da past, it is all over now. And, also, I'm glad I got to observe my own past. Guess what? All dat wasn't my fault.

-Oriana, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: You're right about one thing and wrong about another. You're absolutely right that it wasn't your fault. You were (and in many ways, still are) a child, and children cannot be held responsible for what adults do to them. But you're wrong when you say that it's all in the past. The past is all that we have. It's with us all the time. The "present" is gone instantly, only to become the past. And the future — a dream yet to be realized. What are your dreams for the future? How do you plan to realize them?

I Was Loyal

What I want people to know about me when I go is I was loyal to my family and people I'm close to. Never been a punk or sucka. I also want people to know that I was a good person and I'm a money maker. I love money.

I also want everyone to know that I was a joyful person, and that I was fun to be around. I love to laugh and have a good sense of humor. I would want everyone to know these things, because when I die I don't want people to look back at the bad things I did in my life. I want them to know I was a good person and always looked out for others.

When I die I want people at my funeral talking about how I was a good man. But I hope to live a long, happy life. I want people to look at me and be like, damn, he had it good.

If I have kids before I die, I want to teach them the right things in life. So people would remember me every time they look at them. Remember how I struggled and it was worse at first, then it got greater later.

RIP to all the homies.

-Dre U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What do you do when your love of money interferes with your description of yourself as "a good person?" We're not saying the two can't exist side-by-side, but we are saying that we see too many people who justify bad behavior in the interest of gaining money(and not just young people, and not just people who are locked up). You say you love money. Do you know how the Bible describes that kind of love? It says: "For the love of money is the root of every evil," (1 Timothy 6:10). The Bible may be wrong, of course, but you should think about it. Telling people how they should remember you will not be enough; you have to live your life in a certain way to be remembered that way. If you want to be remembered as a good man, you have to live as a good man lives. It's good that you look out for others, but unless you do it in the right way — which also means looking out for yourself — you will not be remembered the way you hope to be.

Don't Forget Me

I'll never forget how me and my girlfriend Stephanie talked about the day when I would be sent off to jail for countless incidents that occurred involving me. She told me no matter how long my sentence was, she would wait for me.

The morning I went to jail, Stephanie and I were texting each other, but that was the last she heard from me.

I've been in jail for several days now, and I don't believe she knows. We've been together for almost three years, and I don't want us to be over. I can just imagine what she's thinking right now, not hearing from me. I hope to get phone call privileges so we can talk, I just want to tell her to take care of herself, not to worry about me. I'll be home soon.

-Dante, 150 Crew

From The Beat: First of all, Stephanie probably does know you're in jail. These things get through the grapevine much faster than you could ever believe. We're sure she was worried about you, but by now she'll have discovered it, gotten over it and if you're still locked up, we're sure she's visiting you as often as possible. We're also glad that instead of feeling sorry for yourself when you're locked up, that you are more worried about your girl.

Martin Luther King

Martin Luther King was one of the powerful person because he was speaking for his right and for everyone around him. He also fighting for his freedom and everyone else.

They killed King for no reason, just because he was fighting for his right, and the government was trying to prove him wrong. Martin Luther king was stabbed before he was shot. He was a very strong and respected man. That's why I respect him.

I was one time thinking if Martin Luther King was a hustler instead of a preacher, what would happen to the world? Would it got worse in violence.

-Kwes U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We remember Martin Luther King very well. He inspired all of us to be the best we could be. It's impossible to think of him as a hustler. Why do you think that is? He spoke about the best that is in us, so it hurts to see so many young people of all colors hurting and killing one another. But it hurts the most when we see young black men hating other young black men so much that they're willing to shed blood. We think if King were alive today to see what has happened, he would be crying.

What I Want People To Know

When it is my time to go, I want to tell my mom that I love her and that I will miss her very much, tell my dad that I love him too, and I will never forget him ever.

The most important I will miss is my girlfriend and my son. I love her to death that I will kill somebody for her. When I leave, I'm going to leave my house and my cars with my girlfriend and son so they can have a place to stay and car to get around in, I would share my money with my girlfriend and my family.

The way that I want my family to remember me by is a funny, loving, caring person because I make people laugh and the people I'm with have a good time with me. My family loves me and they will never forget about me so I don't have to worry about that. And I care about my family, which means that all the caring that I give to my family even to the people that I don't even know, they will show love right back. And that's how I want to be remembered when it is my time to go.

-B Jr U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: How can you show your love by killing someone? That makes absolutely no sense at all. But we know what you mean. But if you have so much love waiting for you on the outside, why do you allow yourself to be put on the inside? You are cheating the very people you love, and especially your son who is the truly innocent one, the one who deserves a complete family, and not just family words. Come on, JR, you have it in your power to give your son, your girlfriend and your family the thing they want most from you, and that is not a house or money, it is you, with them. Everything else falls short.

Will You Still Be My Angel?

You said you love me
You said you would never leave me
But now you are dead
Got shot in the head
And instead of succeeding
I'm locked up for the things I did
You told me to keep up my head
Now I'm in San Francisco county beds
Will you still be my angel?
At night can we still tangle?
And will you still make my body tingle
While my hopes and dreams mingle?
I stay thinking of you
And the shhh you been through
No matter what, you still my boo
Will you still be my angel?
The one that's looking down from above
Showing me appreciation and love
The one who holds me in his arms?
The one who keeps me safe from all harm?
Will you still be my angel?

-Rosevette U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We know it's tempting to think that someone up above is keeping you "safe from all harm," but you should be able to see for yourself that you are the person responsible for that. Your angel did not put you back into county beds, you put yourself there. Your angel cannot keep you out of county beds, only you can. We're very sorry that you love has paid that terrible and permanent price, but now it's up to you to show yourself "appreciation and love" by respecting God's gifts to you, your life and your freedom.

The Beat

Why do we have Beat? Beat is a way to tell how you feel and tell what's on your mind. And what's on my mind is my life 'cause I'm about to be 18, and I got my life ahead of myself.

Also I want people to know life is a gift, and once it's gone there's no coming back. So take life for what it's got for you, and that don't mean drugs. It mean get a job, get married, do something you want, get your company.

Life is joy.

-Speedy U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We like this piece for two reasons. One, we're happy The Beat gives you an opportunity to express what's on your mind. And two, we're happy that recognizing you only have this one life is what's on your mind. You can achieve your dreams if you plan for them. If you don't make those plans, you'll let others make them for you. (From now on, if your name is not on what you write, we can't put your piece in The Beat.)

Yourself

I look into my eyes and what do I see?
I see sadness and madness
And I ask myself why
Why do I see myself and not other people
I really don't know myself
But I really don't say much to other people
I just talk ta my ninja but now he gone
And I'm still in U4
But now my point in this is ta know yourself
So since we all in the halls we should just find ourself

-Dm U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: When you say you don't know yourself, do you mean that you do things that you don't understand, or that you don't even know where you want to go and what you want to do? Knowing yourself is important, and this is good advice, but how do you use the time you have now to discover who you are? Are you reading books? Talking to people with experience and wisdom? Listening to your parents? What are you learning about yourself?

Forgetful

Well, I tend to forget a lot of things. I'm not saying that I'm a forgetful person though, because there's a lot to forget in the past year of 2006. But there's also a lot that I can't forget when I want to forget it.

I don't know what's wrong with my brain 'cause there's a lot of important things I "can't" forget but tend to forget in like a few hours. While there's a lot that I "want" to forget but just don't seem to erase from my memories.

Talking about this topic reminds me of this one relationship I was in and it is one of the things that I would really want to forget, but just can't. I don't want to explain the story of me and her, but all I could say is that's the first time I fell truly in love.

-Lonely U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You don't really have to explain the details of a love that you wish you could forget. Everyone (of a certain age) reading these words will understand the desire to forget the pain of first love lost, even though the details in each person's memory will be different. If you don't want to share the details of this example, you should think of some examples of your "good" and "bad" memories that you would like to share, because it's the details that make for the best writing.

If I Die, I Want People To Know I Love Them

What I want people to know, before it's my time to go, is that I died for the block, because the block plays a big role in my life, feel me?

I want people to know that even though I was gangbangin' an' doing what I do, that I still love people an' care about people.

Before I go, I want ninjas to know that I was self-made. I'm a thug, feel me? I been doing this shhh. Never set hopped or nothing. Some people gonna respect what I want an' some not. Before I die, I want people to know that I never hated on nobody, I just disliked them.

Sometimes it feels like my time is coming soon, because of the lifestyle I'm living, but I can't turn back now, 'cause I'm used to it before my time. I want my people and my family to know I died for a stupid cause, but to be strong--keep they head up an' think about me.

But for all the girls that I mess wit', I want them to think about me. They gonna feel my presence, just like my family is gonna feel my presence, 'cause even though they can't see my face, I'm still around. I want the girls I mess wit' to know the truth about me an' what I was doing--like messin' around wit' other girls. But they still can love me an' I still care about them. No matter how much we had our hard times, that we all still family.

-Young Jeff LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Tell us more about the block that plays such a big role in your life. If you are/were gangbanging, tell us about those you loved and those you have no love for. How did it get to this point of finding dislike for the others? How does a teenager become self-made? Educate us! If you sense your time is coming soon, is there anything you can do to prevent that from happening? We have plenty of ideas, what about you? You realize this "cause" you fight for is stupid too, well, be courageous enough to make a change! Be your own man, stand on your own two feet! We're not telling you to runaway, we 're telling you to lead by example for the future, before it is too late and you are dead, or on the grey goose off to prison. Hey, once you're gone, how are we going to feel your presence? What will make us feel your presence?

My Life Was Fun

My life was fun because I was at home with my mom and dad. Life was cool, but it is not cool now because I am in the hall, and not at home with the people that love me. No one loves you like your mom and dad. I wish I can go back home. I will stay with my mom and dad, and not run away from home.

My life was fun at home with my mom and dad, because they love me. They would like for me to go to school every day and come back home on time. My mom would like me to have some fun every day at home. Getting some money for the good things, not for the bad things.

-Lil' One U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's funny how much we understand the importance of listening to our parents (who once were kids themselves) after we pay the price for not listening... It's hard to know what's best for us when we're young, even when we think we know. You know that your parents our motivated by love, so they wouldn't tell you to do wrong because they love you. We're sure that they're missing you as much as you're missing them. Juvenile Hall isn't fun and you should keep that in mind when you get back home, because it's easy to fall into old habits and give in to peer pressure. When you have the freedom to be at home or be on the streets, remember where the streets led you.

Trust

Can trust be trusted to stay around?
Like when you need friends or family to hold you down
You always want them to ride or die for you
But some don't even have the nerve to lie for you
If you died, some wouldn't even cry for you
Trust can't be trusted

-Lite Brite, Marin

From The Beat: Do you think you have the right to ask your friends and/or family to compromise themselves by lying for you? What if they get caught covering for you by lying and get in big trouble? There are times when a lie could be acceptable, however, there are times when it isn't. Are you the loyal friend, who can always be trusted, who you wish others were? Is there anybody you can trust? Who? And how can we know whom to trust?

Forgetful

I would never forget the time I got shot at for the first time. It just made me ruthless in a way. I try to put it behind me, but it gets to me every time I hear of someone getting shot because I think that I could be laying six feet deep right now.

After that happened to me I wanted to change my life around because I want to live for a long time and I want to go to heaven. I wanna live long enough to raise my own kids. I was close to getting shot, but by the grace of god the bullet hit my aunt's car instead of me.

But now I'm just ready for whatever because I know it's just gon keep comin'. That's something I would dwell for as long as I live. Now I'm stuck in U7 preparing for when I get out.

-Dexter U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It makes us happy to read that you want to change your life so that you can raise a family, etc. But when we read "I got shot for the first time," all we can ask is what will it take for you to see that one time is enough? You think those bullets have someone's name on them, or that you're immune from their deadly force? Do you think that death is an acceptable consequence? Will you have to be shot to understand where this leads? Will you have to end up confined to a wheelchair, paralyzed and depending on someone else to feed you and bathe you and clean you up before you understand just what you're playing with? When you say you're preparing for when you get out, what form is that preparation taking? What are you doing to make sure you don't get shot at again, and that you don't end up shooting someone else (and thus ending two lives)? We worry that you're not "stuck in U7," but stuck in your thinking...

Happy Food Equals Vietnamese Food

What up, Beat? This yo' mans, Frank, up at LCRS, thinking about that real food waiting for me when I get out. My happy food is some of that Vietnamese food.

Y'all don't know shhh 'bout Vietnamese food. The best shhh is pho (chicken). That shhh be crackn'! Then it's spring rolls with shrimp or BBQ pork, or all the shhh. Vermicelli noodles, dry or in soup is good, either way. And if you ever try the five-spice chicken, man, you'll never eat a different chicken again! All these are my happy food, 'cause they so damn good, you got no choice to be happy.

-Chi-Frank LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've got our mouths watering already, Chi Frank! We here at The Beat office are going to order some Vietnamese take out and charge it to you down there at the Ranch, ok? We haven't tasted it yet and we're already happy! Recommend a good restaurant next time!

Lonely

When I'm lonely I go get me a forty (ouncer of beer).
I like being lonely, even though I drink with a bunch of my boys.
When I drink, I feel like a boss.
I tell people what to do and they do it.
When I'm drunk, I could whoop anybody in a fight, because I'm Chinese.
I'm Chinese and I still whoop anybody, even with or without drugs or alcohol.
Those are the thoughts I have when I drink,
so sometimes I try to avoid drinking.
But when I drink, more girls come to me and notice me,
because I talk more to them and they look cuter and prettier to me.
Now that I'm locked up, I wish I could drink some, just to relieve some stress I'm having. Peace out, Beat.

-Lifer LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The honesty is so appreciated Lifer. How's life without drink going? Do you see the problem with drinking from the piece you just wrote? Before it is too late you need to figure out how to live life without such a crutch. Many of us know how easy it is to start drinking when you're a teenager, and how you (or anybody) can start to rely on alcohol whenever you feel stressed, and then you can be afraid to confront any problems without having a few drinks first. Have you ever talked to someone who is or has been an alcoholic about how hard it is or was for him or her to quit? We hope you too recognize the dangers of drinking, and begin the process of cleaning yourself up! This is as good of a time as any.

Drinking Is All Bad

I won't never forget when my brother had called me and asked me if he could spend a night at my house, and I said, "Yes." And when he came over he said, "Can we do it big?" And I said, "Yes."

So when he came over, I called some of my folks and told them to meet me down the street. And then I told my bro' that I had my folks down the street waiting for us in the scraper! So me and my brother left and met up with them, and we all got in the car. We drove to the town and went to the store to get bottles of that Hennessy — and I was so feeling myself I drank one whole bottle of Hennessy!

By the time we got to Hayward, fifteen more of my folks was on the block with Remy, Hpnotiq, Hennessy — and I was already on one! We was dranking and smoking so much weed, we couldn't take it no more. So I told my brother, "Let's go home." And so we went.

I knocked on the door. My little brother opened it, and I went upstairs, fell on the bed, told my brother to go and get me some water, and he said, "No." And I asked him, "Please?" And he said, "No." And I said, "If I get up, something gon' happen!" And my brother was laughing hella hard at me. So I got up, and soon as I hit that first step, all you heard was bomb, bomb, bomb, bap — and it was my head pounding! And my brother started to laugh at me some more. And my dad was telling my brother, "That's what you get for drinking."

-Ella, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing your "war story" with alcohol abuse, and yeah, that's what you get — short-term. The long-term effects of alcohol abuse are worse on both your life style and on your body. It can even kill you! But, alcohol abuse can be addictive, which is to say, no matter how many bad experiences you have, you still go back for more. It's unexplainable to anyone who isn't caught up in that cycle of addiction because it's so obviously a bad choice and a self-destructive life style. With that said, we hope you learned your lesson, and we hope our readers aren't just laughing like your brother who wanted to "do it big" in the first place — 'cause the last laugh, alas, will be on them.

Never Forget

Relationships... I will not forget the day when I laid eyes on that one girl. It was five and a half years ago. We had our ups and downs, but we always end up making up.

Having someone that you can trust really makes you a happy person. I will never forget that date, August 29th. We never knew that a friendship would last so long and be so strong. I will never forget her in my life.

Being locked up in here makes me feel isolated from the outside world. Feels like there is a force field between us right now. It's been one month and one day being in juvy. It sucks, and I feel that I learned my lesson. I've been aching to go back to school and see my friends. I hate this place.

-Lil' J, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Exactly what lesson have you learned by being taken from your best friend, your loved ones and your school friends? We like to read that you are aching to go back to school, because that is the key to a future that you want for yourself and that your family wants for you. As for your wonderful friend, if the relationship is as you have described it, it will withstand this separation and be even stronger. But if you allow yourself to be removed again, then she will be right to conclude that other things are more important to you than her friendship. (In the future, we will not print any pieces that do not have your name on them...)

I Will Never Forget...

I will never forget the time when I was visiting my brother and some of the other homies from Union City. We was just chillin' reminiscin' about the past events and just smoking 'ports I got a call from my mom, she wanted me home so I shook everyone's hand and me and homie cut.

Two hours later my brother had called me and told me and that him and the homies got stabbed. I asked him when it happened and he told me thirty minutes after I left. I was so angry I wasn't there to help my homies. I almost cried when my brother told me my homeboy T-Bone got stabbed numerous times. My brother got stabbed twice and hit with a sledge hammer and more shhh.

I just prayed to God everything's gonna be alright. And it worked, no one died and that's when I realized this life is crazy and I got to straighten up and go to school and better myself.

-Lil' Vietnamese, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This sounds like one of the most horrifying wakeup calls a person could have. And it's funny, you say you couldn't help your homies, but you strike us as the kind of person who would do a lot to help the people you care about –maybe your destiny isn't just to straighten up and better yourself, but also to use your incredible gifts of insight and writing and communication to be a teacher – to help people like your homies get out of the insanity. That could be your mission!

My Cousin Aaliyah's Birthday

Recently, I celebrated my cousin Aaliyah's birthday. It was on January twenty-second, just a few days ago. And that's why I think they should make her birthday a holiday observed nationally.

Why? So my Auntie Diana can feel better and go to her grave celebrating Aaliyah's birthday and her spirit will comfort her and the family. And this year, if she was still alive, she would be twenty-eight years old. If there was a national holiday on her birthday, they could celebrate the twenty-two years she was with us, and that would make us feel so much better — if January twenty-second could be a holiday to remember that she's still here in our hearts and she's watching over the whole family.

Remember the last video, and that last song — the remembrance of Aaliyah! Remember!

-Melilena, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for reviving the memory of Aaliyah in all of the hearts and minds of Beat readers who do remember that last video and that last song. We wish your Auntie Diana and the entire family all the comfort in the world, a world that will never forget the beauty and the talent of young Aaliyah whose image and voice will never die.

Stuck

days go by
my mind stays
dazed and confused
the choice i made
was mine to choose
now i'm stuck at the bottom
trying to climb from beneath
but still i fall
because the hill i begin to climb
gets steep
no matter where i look
or where i go
it always seems that i'm alone
so i pray to the lord
to lend me hand
maybe he can
be the only one to understand
i hold my ground
till something is found
maybe one day
good things will come around

-Vaionita, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What goes around, come around. Put honesty, generosity, trust, commitment, patience, do-right, forgiveness, hard work and love out there in the world, and many good things will come your way. Good brings good — bad, bad. Pray like it all depends on God, act like it all depends on you.

A Bad Day In 2004: RIP Ora Lee Johnson

I will never forget the day I moved to Hayward. It was a hot day in 1995. I was a bad kid: fighting, talking too much. In 1997 I ran from home with my best friend, I'll never forget that day.

But — she died in '04 — and I guess this day will always be remembered as a nightmare for me. In '04, I wish I could have went with her — my grandmother. It has been three long years all by myself. I cry, I cry.

Wait! I hear a voice calling my name, saying, "I'm okay. I'm okay, don't cry. Baby, it is okay. I'm your angel. I'm here for you. Be good. Be good." It is repeating itself over and over again. RIP Ora Lee Johnson. Love, Jermaine — your grandson.

-Jermaine, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, you sent a shiver down the spine and brought a tear to the eye. Yes, flesh and blood passes on, while love never dies but lives on high — and those blessed with the faith to feel it, will take that love back into a broken heart and let it begin to heal it. Thank you for your sad and yet inspiring piece. Much love and respect to you and your grandmother. As Jesus said in The Lord's Prayer: "May it be on earth as in heaven." For each of us, it must start in the heart.

Uncle Saved

Well something I will never forget was when my uncle got stabbed two times in his stomach. It was on a Friday night. He was outside then all of a sudden he came in to his house bleeding and pale and he just fell on the floor and he was dripping, hella blood. So my aunt screamed, then I grabbed a shirt that was on the floor and put it on my uncle's stomach and applied pressure to stop the bleeding. My aunty was screaming and crying. I was crying, and my cousin, his son was crying too. Then the ambulance arrived and took him. He didn't die.

-Cruz, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How scary! We're so glad you were there to help save him and help your aunt. How has life been for him for you and your family since this unfortunate incident? Did the police ever find the people who did this?

A Hard Person To Please

That person I could never please is probably my girlfriend. I never seem to have time for her. I'm always with my homies instead of her. She's always mad at me for that. I try to spend as much time with her as I can, but my homeboys always seem to get to me first.

I always have this feeling that she is going to leave me, especially now that I am locked up. If I get out of here soon, I'm going to please her by spending all my time with her instead of my homies – who got me locked up.

-Juanito, 150 Crew

From The Beat: She doesn't sound too hard to please. Sounds to us that you haven't given her a chance to be pleased. Maybe you don't want to be with her. Perhaps that's the real reason you don't spend much time with her. Most of us spend our time where our hearts are. Is your heart with her, or with the homies whose behavior lands you in juvy? Maybe you like juvenile hall. Figure out what's really important to you, and go after it. Just be sure you can live with the consequences.

Temperamental

sizzling and burning up
as the heat intensifies
rising from my feet
fahrenheit to celsius
rapidly spreading
blood boiling
flesh broiling
brains frying
heart keeps trying
forms of many shapes
fires of various degrees
fish of many seas
tears from the skies
when the soul cries
memories of past time
makes me want to mountain climb
to reach the top with my pop
it was just yesterday i used to be a scout
but i drove another route
campground
to the dog pound
because of a narcotic
i went idiotic
with a cheap shot
i tied myself in a knot
paying time
for the crime
putting my feelings in a rhyme
paper and pen
are my best friends
rain falls on the ground
i only hear it as a sound
constantly going round and round
then it stops
no more rain drops
the heat went down
all around
i was lost now i'm found
next i'm homebound

-Jrr, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Maybe your temperature was rising 'cause you were compromising your best self, surrendering your sanity along with your good health to a narcotic designed to put your conscience to sleep and keep reptilian-like on the creep. Now you seek through conscious routes to reinvent your best self through poetic pursuits. This inner voice of truth grows more profound as week after week your rhymes resound with knowledge newly found or perhaps rediscovered — knowledge of yourself beyond the judging eyes of others, 'cause redemption is the road of recovery from addiction, insanity and criminal inhumanity that demonized your brain. Now you're clean and feel the pain, but take it like a man whose sane enough to know he's got a world to gain if he remains whole: body, mind and soul!

Mac Dre Day

The holiday is about Mac Dre. No, not him — me, Dre! The holiday is about me. And if I was to have a holiday, it would be a great day 'cause everybody would love the day!

I would have a lot of stuff going on, some bad but most good. The bad is that we would be smoking all day and nobody could do anything about it. Yeah, and at the stores, everything would be half off! And this day would be October eighth, my day! Dre Day! (The Beat made me take the "mac" back.)

We would be on like what — all day, all the girls in the world would be there and just would be having fun on that day! And no one won't have to worry 'bout nothin' but what's goin' on that day — and all eyes would be on Dre. And that's me!

-Dre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Whether you're from MacArthur or you mean mack as in "big pimpin'" — yeah, it's not Beat appropriate: no turf calls and no glorifying the pimping young women (or little girls!) in the Oakland streets. It's the other side of the astronomical murder rate, the devaluing of human life, on the streets of Oakland — demonizing enemies and sub-humanizing knocks and whores (runners, rippers, whatever). With that said, your holiday actually has none of that in it. No violence, no pimping, just fun. But even if you repealed the laws against smoking marijuana by Constitutional amendment — minors would be prohibited from smoking, even on Dre Day!

The Day My Lil' Boy Got Killed

Something I will never forget is the day my lil' boy got killed. November twenty-seventh, that will be an unforgettable day for me because he got killed by our own patna!

It all happened 'cause they was playing with a gun. I guess potna thought that the pistol wasn't loaded 'cause of the fact that they had taken out the clip. But they messed up! Because they had a bullet in the chamber! Rest In Peace: Sepillo.

-Karlitos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Oh no! What a tragic and terrible story! Every vato with a gun has already messed up, and if it ever discharges a bullet, he's messed up even more. This tragic story should be a lesson to all — never pick up a gun. But it's your call. Whenever one is killed, two lives are ruined (not to mention their families). RIP Sepillo.

Have You Ever Lost Your Mind?

Yes, I did lose my mind. Being here at Camp, the staff here always make me mad! I can't be here no more or I am going to lose my mind again!

Today, January 19, 2007, I lost my mind because the staff keeps messing with me, and I don't like this particular staff person because every time he messes with me — he tried to put me down! I just wish I could be in a program that would help me, because I need a lot of help.

People don't know that I keep everything inside. I don't like to talk about nothing, but it is going to be cool. I hope I get out on the twenty-ninth of January so I can go to some programs to give me some help!

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We've watched you do your time at Camp, and we've noticed that you do often get targeted by others, whether it's a particular staff person or another detainee. It does make everything harder. On the other hand, the person who can and must give you the most help is yourself. But yeah, there are some good programs out there that you can get involved in after your release, and we're glad that's what you want to do! Follow through and it will all be cool.

Where Are You From? Keep It Real!

I don't get it. People want be to from places they are not from to fit in juvenile hall. Why would you want to do that when you want to fit in? It don't make you any better than anybody else. This place don't make you any tougher to lie about things. I would just be myself because then you will know who you are instead. No need to change when you come to juvenile hall. That makes you a fake person. Be yourself or nobody.

-Lil' ShaDow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We agree that it's not cool to bullshh and put on fronts, so thanks for encouraging everyone to just be themselves. But keep in mind that people lie or brag to cover up how scared they are, and this is truly the case when it comes to incarceration. Do what you can do to contribute to a positive vibe on the unit, and hopefully folks will feel comfortable enough to be themselves.

Things I'll Never Forget

RIP Ruben and Lil' Jay
Free Lil' D and Rascal
Mom's birthday
My birthday
My girl's birthday
Ruben's birthday
Lil' D's birthday
Dad's birthday
My brother's birthday
When Hank got shot

-Tito, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't usually list RIP's and almost never list Free's, but your list is so full of feeling, writing on The Beat topic with which you're dealing.

Don't Worry About Me

People always want to know about me when it's time to go home for my home visits. They're always asking me hella questions like, "What are you going to do? Are you going to smoke? Are you going to drink? Are you coming back?"

Man, all these freaking questions! Don't worry about me, worry about yourself! Get your home pass first — and stay out of my business! Quit being nosy!

-Young Slot, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good call, but the Camp lives on gossip and talking trash. So don't expect to get any results from this advice. We won't ask what you do on your HV's, but those are all questions you need to ask and answer to and for yourself. And from experience, we'd have to say that if you focus on "getting over" on the system, it comes back to mess you over, either because you don't "get away with it" — or because you do! The more you get away with, the more you act a foo'. You feel?

The Last Word

Well, what's up Beat readers? Well, this might be my last word, because I'm going to be released really soon! Hopefully I'll stay out of jail for good. But I hope the time I've been writing to The Beat, hopefully you've read my pieces and enjoyed them — all of them came from the heart!

Also I hope you've been touched by them. Please believe all the stuff I've written is true, and I will be turning their plan around by doing right instead of wrong — because that's what they want. And if you don't care about where you end up, then that's your problem! And if you do, then take the advice that I gave to you and hopefully you will follow through.

This is my last word: God is Love. And for the last time, it's your crazy Uncle Fairlas.

-Fairlas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Everyone talks about being a player, but if you can turn the system's game on itself — beat the system at its own game, well, that's not crazy at all. That's playing it smart. And we couldn't agree more about putting the punishment system out of business, especially for youth. Every year it gets more like a plain old juvenile jail. So it's on you to "rehabilitate" yourself, 'cause you won't get much help from anyone else. We hope your readers have learned from your words over these months. It all began when you started thinking about your younger siblings. Now we know you've got the spirit, so make sure the flesh stays willing. Major props on getting through this program, but it's only the start of where you're going. Don't let nothing get you down on the road to turning your life around!

What I Want People To Know

Man, I want people to know that I had a hard life. Man, I lost my dad at two years old. My mom try her hardest to keep me off the street, but it didn't work. Man, I put it down in six different states. Man, I want people to know I am a good person.

-Randy U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What we particularly like about this piece is that it really did tell us things about you that we didn't know. We're sorry you lost your dad when you were so young. Can you tell us what makes you a good person?

It's For Us To Figure Out

Blap-Blap is all you hear in the biggest little city of East Palo Alto. Hatred, killings, drug-dealings, youngstas thinkin' they need pistols to survive. Shhh, I guess it's true. When people kill each other over dumb shhh — could be drugs, could be gangs, but shhh, who knows? I guess it's for me and you to figure out, what's going on in this lil' world.

-Chamuco

From The Beat: Nowadays, youngsters are killing each other over their 'hood, drugs, money, etc. But what is gained? The idea that youngsters need guns for protection is refuted by every killing of a youngster who was strapped (and even more by every killing done with the very gun the youngster was carrying "for protection"). As long as we choose guns to "solve" our problems, there will always be somebody with a bigger gun, always someone willing to snuff out a life — the one gift from God that can never be reclaimed once lost. We think we've figured out what's going on, Chamuco. Have you?

Lucero

When I first saw you
You had that light green Latina eyes
I took a second to think that
It was love at first sight
I was so damn surprised to see a girl
Be in a man's world
The first day we met
We sat next to each other
An' I said, "Where you from?"
You said your streets
I said, "I like your style"
She said, "Right on"
Every day we ate at the same table
But, then, I came here
An' when I get out
I'ma find her
So we can be together
But for now
I pray for you wherever you are
I will see you when that time comes
Much love an' respect

-Chino

From The Beat: Love is hard to find, and almost impossible to find in locked jails? We hope you are able to find this special person, and when you do, cherish what you have by being honest and true. By the way, can you explain to us what you mean by "a man's world?"

The Break

Yeah, I've been given a break before, but it hasn't helped me any. I just had to write an essay and four hours of community service. It doesn't really matter if the cop gives you a break, because you might get caught again and wind up in jail.

-Derek

From The Beat: You mean you were given a break and you didn't value it. It's like saying you were given a gift, and then threw it away because you didn't like it. You don't respect your freedom very much, do you? If you did, you'd know that you can only get "caught again" if you do something to get caught again for... Why should the cops or anyone in the system give you a break if you treat them (and yourself) like fools?

Confused Thinking, Part II

I'm hella confused
In the mental state I'm in, I'm unstoppable
You would know if you walked in my shoes
I'm crazy, psycho, maybe a bit too dramatic
But I try to explain, I try to maintain
But I've done so many bad things
That now I try to hide them in the closet
I hold up my pants and bite my lips
I've done a lot of bad things in my life
But I try not to floss it
They locked up down in a cage
We start feelin' enraged
There's a line and I try not to cross it
But I think I've finally lost it
Shhh be quiet
Thump thump thump thump
My heart's at a steady pace
Then I say, "Whoa"
I hear screamin'
Is it God's help I'm seekin'?
But once I step outside
I smell the violence
And it triggers the violence
Flowing in my blood
I'm not wishin'
I guess I'm dreamin'
But I'm wrong again
It's confused thinkin'

-Clarence

From The Beat: Clarence, instead of holding all that pent-up anger inside your heart, let it out through your writing. Use words as a weapon and attack the blank lines on the paper you have in front of you. Even "confused thinking" is thinking, and far too many people, young and old, never really think at all. Maybe that's what's confusing you. In the past, you've done far too little thinking, and now that your brain is kicking into high gear, it confuses you. Let it all out, confused or not, and put it all down on paper. Not only are you not breaking any laws by writing, better yet, you are helping those that are also in your shoes who are reading what you write. We don't know how to address the "many bad things" you have done, except to say that by not thinking about them (by locking them in your mental closet), you may not be helping to clear the confusion. It may be necessary for you to turn and face the monsters of your past deeds that torment you — to face them, to acknowledge them, and to put them to rest. All of us (ALL of us) have things in our past that we're ashamed of, and none of us can undo any of it. All we can do is our best not to do things that we will be ashamed of in the future. If you committ yourself to that goal, it will be a giant step forward for you. Keep writing, Twin.

A Beast

So you ask what I am? I say I'm a beast
Another shady '80's crack baby outta the hood
So much violence in this life I don't know how to act
Don't know what's good and bad
Forgot what's happy and what's sad
Momma flippin' in the kitchen reachin' out for a knife
She steady swingin' but she missin' tryin' to take out his life
Sometimes, I even wonder why I'm still alive
The Lord keeps my head up when I struggle and strive
So when people question my acts and why I do these things
I just smile and laugh it off, but deep inside is a beast

-A Beast

From The Beat: That beast inside you is in your hands to tame or to let out. But even more important than that, we don't think you've dug deep enough below the surface of things. Were you born a beast? If not, then what layers of experience have made you think that the human child you were so short a time ago is gone? Dig deeper, and you will find that the child still lives, still strives to overcome the beast. You can either give in to "the beast" (which seems like the easy way), or you can take hold of your life and your future and fire up the humanity that lies deeper within you than you have, so far, searched.

The Cops Called My Mom

Have I ever been given a chance by the cops? Yes, I have. The chance they gave me is I was in the 'hood and I was hella drunk. They came and they stopped me. They just told me to leave the 'hood and I said, "All right." And when they left, I went back. Then I was kicking it with the homeboys, blazing it and when we finished, the same cops came and I was so drunk that I can barely walk, so they told my mom to pick me up.

-Dumbo

From The Beat: This is why drinking to the point of getting drunk is truly a stupid thing to do — at any age — because it puts your brain on the shelf, allowing you to do things you'd never do if you were able to think. By going right back to doing what it was the cops told you not to do, giving you a break, you let them know how little you respected them (not to mention your mother and yourself). How do you think people react when they are so disrespected? When someone your age is so drunk that that he can "barely walk," he has a bigger problem to deal with than the cops. We hope you deal with your alcohol problem, and soon, Dumbo, because we've been around long enough to know how that problem can mess up everything you try to do in your life if you don't deal with it now. And if you think you don't have a problem, you're in more danger than you know!

Cream

-Merlyn

From The Beat: Well, just like you ordered us to do at the bottom of the piece you wrote, we typed everything your wrote. And then we deleted everything you wrote. It's bad enough that you disrespect yourself and your community enough to be selling your poison and bragging about it. We don't need you to disrespect The Beat, too, with nonsense "teaching" like this. Do you really know the consequences of selling "cream," as you claimed? Sure, you'll probably get locked up and get released, back and forth, back and forth. But what you haven't thought about is how much you've put your life on hold — how much you did not accomplish — all those times you spent behind that metal door and those four white walls. Never mind that you haven't given a thought to those who love you and who are left behind in tears every time you hand your freedom over to someone else who doesn't love you. It occurs to us that you really haven't given much of a thought to anything at all.

Super Bowl 2007

Indianapolis will win the Super Bowl because Tony Dungy shows more active play than the Chicago coach. Peyton Manning is my best quarterback out of the NFL. The reason why I like Peyton Manning because I throw good just like him.

In my experience when I first begun my season starting quarterback. I was real nervous in my first game. I was really scared and I got sacked a few times by the other team. After that game, I got used to throwin' the ball before they sack me, and both head coaches said that I throw just like Peyton Manning. I started throwing short and long good passes to my team. And that's how I learned and got respect from my coaches.

-Young Cherrio

From The Beat: Hey, Indy did win! Maybe one day we'll see you in the NFL. But first you have to get out, stay out — and stay in school. It begins there, and requires you to make some sacrifices, but if you want it enough, you'll do what you have to do to get it. Good luck!

People Killing, People Dying

When we ride, we ride 'til we die
People killing, people dying, children hurt
And others crying
Oh, God, please help us and give us another day
To survive in this city

-Apache

From The Beat: We all end up dead sooner or later, but there are things you can do to make it sooner, and there are things you can do to make it later. If you want another day, another year — a long life — the choices you make today will either help or hurt your desire. We are always interested in prayers to God asking for another day, as if God is not asking you to change your way... God hears the prayers through your deeds, not through your words. If your deeds show that you are not listening to His prayers, what do you think His answer to your prayers will be?

I Did It In The Hall

I don't keep time, time keeps me.
When things go wrong sitting behind bars
You are not with your family and friends driving around, going to places in cars.
Your dinner is not sitting in your usual spot, just dinner is already served on steel.
No extras and you have to punk people for it or tell them to pay up
because you won on dominoes or cards.
but the food is not even hot shhh.

Someone asked what time it was today.
Hell, I don't know. What reason? I say,
"I don't have a reason, I guess,"
I answer him "Time has no meaning you frigging pest."
I am locked up like a fish in a can
I am too old for this shhh. Hell, yes, I do give a damn.
I don't keep time, time keeps me.
Out there doing wrong is when I don't see no purpose it served.
You only have one life.

Why? 'Cause my family and people, this is strife.
Please get me a watch and I'll keep time tonight.
Time only matters when there is somewhere to be.
Not sitting here in jail wondering where they will send me.

-Lil' Vato

From The Beat: Lil' Vato, you said you are not keeping time but time is keeping you. That's the same as saying, "I am not doing time, time is doing me." Even though you are locked up, that doesn't mean you can't take control of the time you are doing. Why let time take advantage of you? Time moves forward, whether we use it for our benefit or let it use us by doing nothing, and that's true whether we're locked behind bars or so-called free. The things you hate about being locked up are the very definition of what a jail is. (If it were a hotel, people would be lined up to get in rather than waiting to get out.) What are you doing with the time that moves with you or without you? Are you educating yourself? Are you taking advantage of the schooling provided? Are you learning new things, especially those things that will help you stay free when you are out from under the oppression you're experiencing now? Those are all critical questions that you should be asking yourself.

Just Tryin' To Survive

I live in a world where people get robbed and shot
Out there on my block
You see parents cryin' over people's bodies
Outlined with chalk
You see people runnin' away from their problems
Like a track star jock
You see people tryin' to survive
On da street
Even if you're just tryin' to stan' on your feet
People start to label you as a cheat
Next thing you know, you're locked up
Writin' for The Beat

-Skitz-Z

From The Beat: Yes, the world out there is crazy. But even though you live in a world of violence, that doesn't mean you have to join it. Look around you... do you want your parents crying over your dead body? Do you want your name on a tombstone? We are all trying to survive in the world, it's just that some hustles lead here, while others lead to a better future. Is the legit hustle easy? No. But is it worth it? Absolutely!

Crack In My Community

Crack has been a big thing in my neighborhood. I've seen it tear people's lives apart. I mean people use crack to escape the pain and stress of everyday life. They don't know that it's going to ruin their lives for the longest. You'll end up homeless and alone. I have family members that did crack, and they had to start all over because of this drug. It's hurtful to see this, but what should happen is they should destroy this drug or let people suffer from it.

-Derek

From The Beat: Most drugs can easily destroy one's life. If people take drugs to escape from their problem, how effective do you think it is? Have you seen how taking drugs to escape the stress of life only adds more stress, not just because the effects of the drug wears off, but because they've now added a new layer of stress they have to deal with? How long can a person run from his problems before they catch up to him, and when they do, how can he deal with them if his mind is messed up under the influence? If you were given a chance to help those that are on drugs, how would you do it, Derek? If you were the community leader, what would you do to help clean up this drug or any other?

My Heart

Respect, love and money play a big part in my heart
Tryin' to always get it—schemin' and bein' smart
I hustle for all the above and most importantly, me
Sometimes there are haters, but to hate they pay the fee
Life-long lessons soaked up and imprinted on my head
Wrong decisions leading me closer to me being dead
Follow ya heart and do what you do
Never make the same mistake, because, then, you a foo'
Don't take too long to realize the path you've taken
If it's positive, don't worry, but if it's not don't be forsaken
There's help everywhere and anywhere
But it's your choice to ask for it and show care

-Vago

From The Beat: Nice flow Vago. You laid out the choices pretty clearly. We hope — oh, so much — that these are more than just fine words. Have you asked for the help you need? Are you still seeking? Which road have you chosen to take — and where are you getting the help you'll need to travel that road?

Crack And My Community

I think crack cocaine destroyed many lives. I know because I used to use the drug. My family got me into it. It was first handed to me by my uncle and my friends. They were always there with the drugs.

I started to use the drug every weekend. And I started to get more addicted to the drug. I would waste half of my paycheck on the drug. So I am lucky that God punished and put here, because I know that I would have been shot or dead or maybe overdosed out on the streets. That's why I am reading the word of God and changing my life around, because my life and family is important to me and I know God can help me change my life around.

-Carlos

From The Beat: We are proud of you, Carlos, not just for getting control over this deadly addiction, but for having the courage to be open and honest about it. Turning to God for support is truly important, but sometimes God helps those who know they need help, and who seek the support of others who can give it. Whether through NA or some other program, make sure you get all the support and help you can during you time of change. It's so much easier to take control of a drug addiction when you're locked up and unable to get your drug than when you are back, surrounded by people who don't have your welfare and future at heart. Remember that addiction is an illness, and illnesses need care and attention. You can't just wish it away! Like we said, we're proud of you. Good luck!

Bein' "Free"

Tomorrow I'm out. I don't feel happy because when I get out I'm going right to the streets. I should stay home, but it's peer pressure that gets me down. I know I should try my best to stay out but I keep coming back.

I have four months here and they were trying to keep me longer. But at the end, I am going home. It's really messed up in the outs, so I'm going to have to watch my back. Anyways, hasta luego. Al rato. Los veo. (See you later.)

-Enfadoso

From The Beat: Hey. Enfadoso, at least you are keeping it real with yourself and with us. We appreciate that. And now, we are going to keep it real with you. Changing is not an easy thing. It is something you're going to have to take one step at a time. Going back to the street will do you no good. You already know that, but yet you are still doing it. It seems like you already have your mind set on coming back to the halls — or worse. (And remember, those peers who are pressuring you to return to the block will not be doing the time for you.) If you don't want to change, or you're just not ready to change, you are not going to do it, no matter what you tell yourself. Knowing what the consequences are and doing it anyway reminds us of a man we met in the hospital once. He had severe lung disease. He was coughing and hooked up to oxygen to help him breathe. But even so, he asked if we had a match so he could light his cigarette! We told him he'd have to kill himself without our help.

Change

I have made many changes in the past ten months. Mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. All of the changes were due to my stay here at Hillcrest. All of my changes have been positive changes, all in order to be better myself. One change I did forget was self discipline.

Self-discipline was one of the hardest things I have done to better myself. I struggled throughout my change because I relied so much on other people, and took the little things for granted like being taught. I never went to school on D-unit for the past ten months because I was done with school and too late for college. So instead of giving up and letting myself go to waste, I disciplined myself to start reading and educate myself and stayed with it when times got hard. When times got hard I had to be mentally strong.

Emotionally I changed a great deal. I came in not able to control my emotions. I would get frustrated, sad, and angry all because I did not do what they are charging me with and I wanted to get out right away. I had to realize I have to be patient and don't let your emotions rally you up because it can end up hurting you or someone else.

I remember one time I came back from court. I was told I am not getting out and I got to take it to trial. I let my emotions get to me and ended up cursing out one of my favorite staff for something small, ending a great relationship. After that I decided that I need to really control my emotions. I can't go on in life taking out my anger on other people.

I use my anger in a positive way by working out. I have physically changed a lot, thanks to Mr. Brown and the staff. My body is in great condition. It is in the best it has been ever. I owe myself some credit because working out is optional and I chose to come out and work out, and the nine months of working out has paid off. And I'm lovin' it.

I have changed spiritually now because I am into God. Before I got here, I thought it was just a hype to keep people from doing wrong. If you think about it, rules are made to keep people from doing what's wrong and we base what's wrong from what we read in the Bible, but now I think there is one and I'm here because He wants me to see that I was not living the right way and I need to turn my life around. That's why I feel like when I get out I'm going to do good and continue my school at Academy of Arts University.

-Tostsi

From The Beat: Thank you, Tostsi for this terrific piece of thinking and of writing. It is a piece of art. You have not only gotten control of your anger, not only grown physically and mentally and spiritually, but you have (without knowing it) become a first-rate teacher! We know that a lot of people will be very grateful for what you have shared with them about yourself and the changes you've made. You are right to thank the staff who have helped you along the way, without your willingness to make these changes, the best staff in the world couldn't bring them about. So give yourself more than a little credit. Everything you've done will pay off big time in the future. What would you like to study at the Academy of Arts University? We have no doubt that you can accomplish whatever you set that strong mind to. What a wonderful piece. Thank you, and good luck!

Staying Healthy

In order for you to stay healthy, you have to exercise and eat fruits and all the healthy food you can get. Well, how I stay healthy is by exercising and eating three meals a day and running and doing what I need to do at P.E. — you know, the stretches and running when they tell you to, and playing the games that they play, basket ball and other stuff.

I hope that when I'm about forty or fifty I'm alive and healthy. You know, still eating three meals a day, running and exercising. That's why I don't smoke because if you smoke you get addicted. The cigarettes has nicotine and that's way you get addicted, plus the smoke is bad for your lungs.

So I hope you make the right decisions and help other people make the right decisions. Thank you for listening and for reading my writing.

-Chucky

From The Beat: No, thank you Chucky for sharing with us your strategy to a healthy life. You have written this piece very well, with the details that make the best Beat pieces, giving people more reasons to stay healthy. We really admire you for not smoking when so many others around you do — never thinking about what they want to look and feel like when they reach that ripe old age of forty or fifty. Have you every thought about being a health counselor or PE teacher? Maybe you should think about it.

A Tear Running Down My Eyes

It's like a tear running down my eyes
When I get near ya I wanna try to actually get by
But dis crazy world gots me singing lullabies
Take a second and realize that this pain is killing me inside
The temptation I can't hide
Most of the homies say they down to die
So come and try your luck
End up getting stuck
Then ask yourself was it worth it
No so then stop or make it to the top

-Jonathan

From The Beat: You'll feel better, Jonathan, if you let some of that pain you describe out on paper. Don't hold it in and especially don't run away from it. It is just going to cause more problems in your life. It's not a question of "stop or make it to the top." It's a question of "Stop, or you'll never make it to the top." Think about it.

The Day I Got Locked Up

The day I got arrested I felt so sad. When they booked me into juvenile hall, I felt so empty because I couldn't believe it, that I was locked up again, my second time getting locked up! Every day I felt as if I was a zombie. As each day came closer to my court date, I felt less and less sad.

Finally my court date came. I was so happy I was getting released on that same day, but the DA did me grimy and said that he had to talk to my PO about F.P.P., and so I had to stay in another week until my next court date. Man, I was so mad, but at the same time I was happy because that meant in a week I would probably be released. So now I am just waiting until that court date comes.

-Azn

From The Beat: And we hope after this time you will be able to stay out!

Given A Break

I was tagging behind Safeway, and the cops came. So I ran and jumped a fence. Then a few blocks later, the cops stopped me and they were like, "We just want to talk to you; we're not going to arrest you." I was like, "Ok." Then they just gave me a warning and let me go but they know my writing so I never tagged again until I got a nickname. But I really didn't care so that's what happened.

-Chris

From The Beat: Are you here for tagging? If you don't really care, who will? Most taggers that we know have major skills, so maybe you need to find a way to express your art that will bring you positive attention instead of negative attention.

To My Brother

Dear Brother,

When I get out. I would teach you a lot of stuff like to tell you what happens if you steal, because when I came to this state, I did not know the rules. So I went and stole a lot of stuff and then I got caught by the police and came to jail. I don't want you to come to jail because is not a good. This because they would keep a record about you and I would be really sad if you came to jail. I really love you and I supposed to be a good role model for you, you feel me.

-Jose

From The Beat: Did you really not know that if you steal stuff you get caught by the police? We ask you this because we know that whatever your words to your little brother — and they are very good words, words that he should hear out of your mouth — he will be following what you do. So be sure you don't do anything you don't want him to do, because you are his role model, for good or for bad.

Super Bowl 2007

Yes! Yes, lets go! Super bowl 2007 is comin' up on Sunday. I'm goin' for Indianapolis. Dat's my team. But I ain't trippin' if Chicago win because both of them have black coaches. It's like five of them in the NFL. That's giving black people more opportunity at coaching in the NFL. So this year it's coo'. I'm going for Indianapolis, but I'm happy for both the team.

-Pac-B

From The Beat: We love the spirit of this piece. With an African-American coaching both teams, you've decided that you win either way. It's icing on the cake that the team you wanted to win actually did win! Indy won the Super and it's the first time in Super Bowl history that a African American coach brought a team to Super and won! History has been made.

Carnals/Carnalitas I

I pray for you every day
To get your life straight
You need to be free
Instead of taking orders by a GSIII
No matter how much you disrespect me
I'll still be your homie
I may be not be down anymore
But I'm down to score
I am what I am for life
But I'm on the road to do things that is right
Education before banging
That's the way I was laced
So to all the carnals/carnalitas out there
Stay up, head up
Don't let your guard down
And take care of each other
Much love an' respect
By a Filipino/Brazilian homie

-Chino

From The Beat: Nice piece, Chino. Seems like your mind has opened up to something bigger, but your heart is still there with your homies. Change takes time and we understand that, and sometimes it's hard to let things go that have been with you for a while. At least now you know that there is more in life than banging, and you are heading down a road that really has no end.

To: Carnals/Carnalitas II

Yeah, this Chino. You should know me
I've been getting disrespected for being a homie
It doesn't matter to me because I am still
For the rest of my life, until I die
I'll be in my heart
But now I'm gonna do things smart
And do things right
If you don't' like it—take flight
A real homie would respect
The fact I'm direct
My life correct
Ya should be proud that a homie's gonna make it
I'm leaving my past, put I won't forget it
Take a second to listen to this lecture
An' think about our future

-Chino

From The Beat: You are right, a true friend won't disrespect you, but rather take pride that you are committing yourself to living your life the right way, and choosing a better future for yourself. We know we are proud of you, that your true loved ones are proud of you, that your teachers are proud of you... and that the only opinion that counts is yours. What those you are addressing don't understand is that by turning this corner (while at the same time not forgetting who you are or where you came from), you can also benefit them through the accomplishments that lie ahead of you.

A Typical Day In The Hall

Waking up early morning, getting ready for breakfast, and thinking about ways to not stress during the day. Sitting here listening to staff telling us what to do. It's hard to be there when loved ones can't come visit, but depending on a beezie to show a lil' love to a homie.

-Chamuco

From The Beat: This is the life you chose, even if you didn't mean to choose it. No one likes to being told when to sleep, eat, wake up, or even what to wear. Still, a lot of youngsters are doing things (over and over) that give others power over their day-to-day lives. If, as we say, you made the choice to be here, then you can make the choice not to be here, too. How much is your freedom worth to you? Enough to sacrifice the things you like doing now so that you can live in freedom tomorrow?

The Big Break

I had gotten a break by the cops once before, and to me it was a big break. Some people say they're all the same and messed up. I don't think that.

My three cousins and myself were coming back from San Jose on a Saturday night. It was about two in the morning, and we were in my cousins' car heading back home. Then I told them if they were down to go kick some guys out that were always in front of my dad's warehouse. They would piss next to the trucks because they were always drinking. So when we got there, I was surprised because they were all gone.

What caused us to almost get arrested was that all three of my cousins were drunk and I was the only one that hadn't drank, so I was driving. So then, all three of them started pissing on the street. The cops came around the corner! They told me to get out of the car and they grabbed my oldest cousin and put the handcuffs on him right away because the cops knew him from previous times they had arrested him. They had me and my other cousins laying on the ground, and the cop that told us to lay on the ground searched our car. The thing that helped us was that the cop searching the car knew me and one of my cousins from school, and he knew we were good kids. We were still trippin' though because we had three switch blades in the car. They could've brought us in, but the cop gave us a break.

-Edgardo

From The Beat: Do you see the irony in setting out to beat people up because they're always drunk and urinating next to your dad's trucks, while your cousins — the very people you asked to assault the drunks — were themselves dunk and urinating in public? By what reasoning could you justify one set of drunks attacking another set of drunks? We don't know what you did to end up in the halls this time, Edgardo, but we hope that the next time you get a big break, you live up to that reputation for being a "good kid," and do nothing that will cause you to have to give up your freedom again.

Crack In My Community

Crack in my community is a really bad thing. It's big and the drug is very addicting. I know because in my community lots of older people smoke, and when I ask why they smoke, they say that they smoke for family reasons. Someone was lost in drug related things and soon as they try to give it up they can't. So they go to jail, and that's how they get off of it if they want. I think that it all mental, and that's the community of East Palo Alto.

-Young G

From The Beat: We agree that addiction is a mental thing, but it's also a physical thing. Once you fall under the control of chemicals, your body and mind change, so that making decisions and following through become very difficult. So it's not just a matter of wanting to stop. That, of course, is absolutely necessary, but after that, getting the help of professionals, and the support of others who have been there, is just as important.

Super Bowl 2007

Super Bowl 2007, I would like the Indianapolis Colts to win, but it does not make a difference because both coaches are African-American. The reason I want the Colts to win is because it is about time Manning and Marvin Harrison get a Super Bowl. They are one of the best QB, WR due since Young and Rice. Manning and Harrison broke Young and Rice's record. So I think that should be a good enough reason.

-Tosti

From The Beat: And the winner to Super Bowl 2007 is the Indianapolis Colts! We swear, you are about the tenth person to write in this issue hoping the Colts will win — and the second to point out that whoever won, it would be the first time an African-American coach got to the Super Bowl. About time? Absolutely!

My Beliefs

Yeah, I'm a gangsta from the streets that consume
Where violence is normal, like Halloween with costumes
Instead, there's real blood and real killings
Home of no emotions and no feelings
We ride for our 'hoods and beliefs
Caught up in the crossfire, due to the beefs
So if you don't know, all of this is new
This is the life of a gangsta and what we do

-Vago

From The Beat: How is the life of a "gangsta" different from the life of an American soldier (or any nation's soldier) who simply follows the orders of others (who don't risk themselves) for a "cause" or "beliefs" that someone else gave them? The President orders them into combat (the beef), and they salute and follow. It's only after they return (if they return), broken and injured, suffering from life-long disabilities like Post Traumatic Stress, that the experience they've been through forces them to start thinking for themselves, and realizing that they have been had. What is the cause worth landing in a wheelchair for life, dependent on others to wipe your behind? What is the cause worth giving your life for, so that the next child waiting "to serve" takes your place, while you're quickly forgotten by all but those you've left behind in tears? What cause is worth giving those that love you permanent scars, a pain that they can never get out from under? Does the soldier owe more to President Bush than to the person who gave him life and sacrificed so much so that he could live? Do you owe more to the 'hood (that you live in only as an accident of geography and not of your choosing) than to her? Who is really "caught up in the crossfire" but the innocents, the bystanders, the mothers and fathers, the sisters and brothers? We have seen so many "causes" that our country tells us are worth dying for, only to see the death toll mount until the cause disappears to be replaced by the next cause that calls for more young men and women to shed their blood. And, to be honest, we're sick to death of it!

Mi Jefita

Mi jefita está bonita. Es una maravilla. Le pido perdón por todo lo que le he hecho. Le doy gracias por el techo que me ha dado aunque yo fui malo.

Muchas gracias madre por lo mucho que me amas.

From The Beat: Esperamos que llegues a recibir el perdón de tu madre. Ya es tiempo que sientes cabeza y te des cuenta que el camino que llebas no te llevará a nada bueno. Andar en pandillas no lleva a nada bueno. Estas entregando tu vida a algo que no tiene sentido. Esperamos que reacciones a tiempo antes que algo malo te pase. Cuidate amigo.

My Mother

My mother is pretty. She is marvelous. I ask her for forgiveness for everything I have done to her. I give her thanks for the roof she has given me, even though I was bad.

Thank you very much, mother, for how much you love me.

-Lento, Marin

From The Beat: We hope that you're able to receive your mother's forgiveness. It is time for you to get it through your head and you realize that the road you are following will not lead you to anything good. Being in gangs does not lead to anything good. You are delivering your life to something that has no meaning. We hope you react in time before something bad happens to you. Take care, friend.

Lo Que Quiero Olvidar

Lo primero que quiero olvidar es que pase el Nuevo Año en este lugar y no la pase con mi familia. Ellos estan demasiado largo, pero muy pronto estaremos juntos nuevamente. También nunca he olvidado a mi madre y a mis hermanos que siempre los traigo en mi corazón.

From The Beat: Olvidarlo pueda ser que lo hagas, pero si sigues en los mismos trotes, puedas que llegues a pasar otros días festivos en este lugar. Tienes personas que también te extrañan. Deberías de buscar la forma como quitarles esa tristeza.

What I Want To Forget

The first thing that I want to forget is that I spent the New Year's in this place and I didn't spend it with my family. They are far away, but very soon, we will be together again. I also have not forgotten my mother and my brothers who I always carry in my heart.

-Donadi U6

From The Beat: You may be able to forget about this, but if you continue down the same path, you may find yourself spending other festive days at this same place. You have people that also miss you. You should find the way how you can take this sadness away from them.

MARIN

Heaven Now

What's up, mom? I know you're sad,
'cause I'm gone, but it's all right
It's beautiful up here—no jealousy, fear, greed, and no fights
I saw Uncle Eric for the first time in ten years
I know it's hard to read this, but please hold back your tears
I'm okay—I'll see you one day, and that's a promise
I met 2Pac, Marvin Gaye and even Nostradamus
Grandma says she misses you and she will see you soon
I can't believe me and Martin Luther King Jr. were in the same room
I'm sorry, ma, but I got to go
I love you and that's what you need to know

-Jay

From The Beat: This is very creative piece Jay! What inspired this piece of you poetically writing home from the heavens? Since you are alive and well, of course things could always be better, how about putting a plan together that will make your mother proud of you? What would be the first step?

Tryna Play Me

What it do, Beat? Man, these people tryna play me like I'm dumb. They keep movin' my court day over to the next week. They just want to keep me in orange and blue, but I'm not goin' sweat it, 'cause it's not worth my time. Until pen meet paper, I'm out.

-Purplicious

From The Beat: Maybe your court proceeding just got complicated or someone didn't show up like he/she was scheduled to. That's why there's a delay in your case proceedings. What do you hope happens when the judge hears your case? What are you doing to make sure you can go home soon? Like you said, "until paper meets pencil."

Forgetful

There are two related times that I wish both me and my mom would forget or that I wish she just hadn't have to see. Both these times were when she had to see me get arrested. Both those times, I remember clearly, because I looked her in the eyes both times and saw how sad she was to see me get arrested.

The second time both the cops tackled me for no reason and I could hear my moms in the background. Those stick in my memory, because I think it's too much for mom to stress 'bout after she already knows she ain't gonna see me for two and a half months while her son gets tackled in front of her.

-Stuart

From The Beat: This is a very difficult time for a mother. It's very painful to see the most important thing to be taken away, especially when it happens in the presence of those who love us. Will the memories of these two incidents keep you from messing up when you're out again, regardless of whether your mom you being humiliated or not? There's a way to prevent this from happening again, and you know what's the way out.

The Death Of My Cousin

TBW: Henny, it's great that you want to be interviewed today. What would you like to talk about?
HM: My cousin was in a high-speed chase by eight cop cars and then he crashed and jumped out of the car and ran into some apartment buildings, and another cop came from another direction. He was trapped. He pulled out a 9 millimeter but he didn't shoot anyone. Then the cops shot him two times in the forehead. It happened January 28th, 2005.
TBW: Why were the police chasing your cousin?
HM: He was just speeding, basically. The same police officer who shot my cousin had shot another Black man before.
TBW: So you think the policeman was racist?
HM: Yup.
TBW: But your cousin pulled his gun first, right?
HM: Yup.
TBW: So do you think it's reasonable for the cops to think he was going to shoot them?
HM: He pulled his gun out, but he didn't point it at them.
TBW: How do you know that?
HM: My other cousin was with him and that was his story.
TBW: Did your other cousin also have a gun?
HM: I don't know.
TBW: How old are your cousins?
HM: One was twenty-five, one was nineteen.
TBW: Which was the one who the police shot?
HM: The one who was twenty-five got killed.
TBW: Do you think if your cousin had been white, the police wouldn't have shot him?
HM: Yeah.
TBW: Why do you think that?
HM: Why do you think the country's racist? Because when a white person does something serious, they (the authorities) don't take it serious, and when a black person does something petty, they put it on the front page news, like in my case, but I don't want to talk about it.
TBW: And you think the authorities punish Black people they think are offenders more than they do white people?
HM: Yeah.

-Henny

From The Beat: We're sorry for your loss. Let us put you in this position, if you had somebody shooting at you, and you had a gun, what would you do? Shoot back right? This doesn't show anything related to racism. But if you think this way then we just hope that, especially because you may be also discriminated against, you take special care, now and once you're free again, to keep yourself safe, even from the police. Why can't you be one of the many people who never has contact with the police? WE encourage you to read and educate yourself, that is what will be your ticket to the free world, knowledge/education.

. . . because I looked her in the eyes both times and saw how sad she was to see me get arrested.

Chillin'

Man what's up Beat. What's good, well I'm just like a billin' you feel me. I really don't have much to say. So I'm gonna just say what's' up Beat. This is Mike Jonez comin' from the town. Holla at yo' boy. It's that Mexicano Italiano straight up. Late.

-Mike Jonez

From The Beat: Man, Mike, Beat readers far and wide have been looking forward to their Mike Jonez fix, and they'll be disappointed in this latest lack of output! The time is not now to take a vacation on the writing. We need you to teach, not just shout out to the homeis and Vee, come on!!

A Day To Observe Is My Life

I have a day to observe the life that I got, but I don't pay attention to life because I'm too busy on the outs. How come when you are on the outs you don't pay attention but when you come in have you pay attention?

-Nito

From The Beat: Sometimes it's easier to ignore the difficulties that life has presented you with than to face them. Getting locked up not only presents you with the time to think about it, it forces you to by virtue of where you are – in jail! In case you haven't noticed, it's generally the same folks who get locked up: black, Latino, poor, under educated. You can't change the color of your skin, but you can get educated if that's what you really want. But you have to be willing to ask for help, and you have to know you may often be disappointed. But if you keep asking, someone is going to respond.

I'm Loving, Caring And Smart

When I leave this earth I want people to know me as a loving caring and smart me, not a crazy and careless person.

I want my mom and sister to know I love them and my father to know we're still cool even if we never had a compatible relationship. I would also want my godmother to know I love her and the same for the rest of my family. Because they concur with my decision to change my life around for the good.

-T- Manney

From The Beat: Who wouldn't? Anyone who really cares about you would want you to do the right thing for you. Getting locked up is clearly not good for you, as well as whatever it is you do to get locked up.

Forgetful

One thing that I would never forget in my life is when I got shot five times in the mouth, the chest, ass, and the back twice. That's what I will never forget ever.

-Emmanuel

From The Beat: That is something that would be difficult to forget surely. The trauma that you experiences aside, you actually have physical scars to remind you. You are a very lucky young man to be alive. We are so glad that you made it and we hope that you give your "second chance" the dignity it deserves and you don't go out like they wanted you to the first time. And we don't mean revenge, we mean doing right for yourself, your family and your community.

Sorry

I messed up in school. I tried to fight my staff, it was not the best thing to do. I will not do that again, I will do better in school. I'll do my work now in school and I'll be in class too.

-Marcel

From The Beat: Good for you for setting positive goals for yourself. Best of luck, we know you can do it especially if you set your mind to it! Action speaks louder than words!

I'll Never Forget How I Got Here

After I get out this position I will never forget how I got in here and what happened for the police to come pick me up. I wouldn't forget how long I did and what time they are tryin' to give me.

-Marcus

From The Beat: We know you'll never forget any of this, you've had to suffer a lot of pain and anxiety over what happened in the past and waiting on court to decide on your future. But have you asked yourself if you'll ever be able to make peace with it? You know how much we admire the way you stay positive and smiling and laugh in the face of your struggle. So we know you've got heart. Maybe it's that heart that will give you the strength to get through this.

You Need To Know

I want people to know that this is not me. The life of crime. This life shouldn't be for anyone but definitely not me. I have a family that cares for me, a loving mother and stepfather, a brother and sister who care.

So why is this life of crime still haunting me? Because of my past criminal mind.

There is this girl named Lana. We broke up a couple of weeks ago. We always break up and then go back out. She needs to know that I love her with all my heart and I want things to work out so that's what I want people to know.

-Alev

From The Beat: If it's not for you, why are you doing it? Blaming it on your so-called criminal mind is to not take responsibility for your own actions. No mind is inherently criminal. You have to choose what you want for yourself, your family and your girl.

Becoming A Man

Que Vo... Well today's topic is about my birthday. My birthday is comin' up in March, 2007. And I'm a turn 18 and well, hopefully ROP comes and picks me up that day so I won't be here. But if they don't, hey! It's cool, I ain't trippin' as long as I know that I'm gonna get out. It's all gravy you feel me, lastly to all, keep yo' heads up.

-Curioso

From The Beat: It's been a real honor having you and your positivity in our workshops every week, George. We know that you are still battling between the side of you that wants to do right and go legit and stay away from the bloodshed and pain... and that other side of you, that gets caught up in gang hatred and fighting. All we can say is that you have proven to us (and the counselors and a lot of the other people who know you) that if you choose to follow the best in your heart, you will be at true Leader, a role model for all of us. Be the man you know you can be, and wherever you end up, whatever you do, there will always be a place for you in our hearts and in our paper. Peace.

A Holiday For All

I think everybody should have a holiday after them because everybody life is significant in it's own way and everybody contributes to something good in they life, even if they life wasn't lived to the fullest because it got took by a bullet. Sometimes if you think about people who should have a holiday after them I would mostly say myself—like I think everybody would want one after them too.

-Boopy

From The Beat: You touch on something very profound in this piece, and it's the idea that everyone exists for a reason—that each person means something and that no one can be defined by their bad deeds alone. That said, there are certain individuals who go above and beyond the average soul in making the world a better place—some of those people we celebrate as a community, some go unnoticed.

Not Forgetful

The one thing I cannot forget is the first time I had sex. It was in the third grade to keep it solid, I didn't know what I was doin'. We was under the table, the class was watching a movie and the teacher was hella stupid. People reading this probably think I'm lying but what I got to lie for? That is a day that's not forgetful.

I'm gon' holla at you next week.

-Lil' Rome

From The Beat: We believe you a hundred percent. But we also think it's too bad. There's a time for sex and there's a time for childhood. It seems to us like you got forced to grow up too fast – between the girls and the drugs and the life, it's almost like all the good stuff about being a kid — feeling safe and protected, being goofy and innocent, playing silly kids games, believing in Santa Claus... got taken from you. Do you ever wonder what life would be like if you'd had more of a childhood and not had to grow up so fast?

Like Me, But Smarter

I want people to know that I was a soldier and I was a money getter, feel me, cause man I ain't never went out, and my pocket was and ain't never gone touch.

Man and when my kids be born bra, if I'm dead tell my son everything so that when he grow up he will be something like me but smarter. Let them know that it's dirty on my mama and if they choose not to go school, let them know they got they own block and they can post whenever and always remember bra in my stash I got 200,000 and 100,000 for each of my kids and don't get over!

-Lil' Dre

From The Beat: See, right now you think you're wishing your children the best life ever – their own block, cash money from whatever you've stacked, and finally street smarts that you missed out on. But Dre, that is a horrible past for you to have faced and a horrible way for them to make their lives. Maybe you grew up seeing that as the only way to make money, but it isn't! Even the worst neighborhoods have organizations that will help you – and one day your kids – get legit work, education, mentorship, people that will help you out and teach you the skills you need to make it in the BIG WORLD out there beyond the block. Don't tell us you would ever aim so low as to leave your children a block, when they have the right to the whole world, just like you!

Forgetful

I want to know how much time you would do in 2006 because that's one of the things that I forget and I am very forgetful about coming to the hall fo' 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 but this is my last time because I'm too old to come back.

-Nito

From The Beat: If you've been coming to the hall for almost seven years it's no wonder you don't remember how much. It also means that you have been coming since you were old enough and now you're about to be too old. What do you think is next? Do you think your days of getting locked up are over? Or are you going to spend the rest of your life doing this in and out thing? Are you going to officially become a member of the prison class? They say one out of 10 people in the United States has been in prison. Do you want to be that one?

Remember Me

What I want people to say or think of me ...well to tell the truth, I just don't want to be forgot.

But I guess we'll just see when it happens or remember me as a real ninja cause that is what I am it's all you can be out here in this struggle. I'm out Beat.

-White Boy Kev

From The Beat: You won't be forgot. You're already unforgettable to The Beat, and you've only even written a few pieces. We're not sure what you mean by "real ninja" though. Tell us more next time?

I Miss My Sis'

Man, my sis' got released! I'm hella happy for her, and I pray she don't come back. Man, I have so many memories — stayin' up all night talkin' 'bout hella stuff! Man, Mikka, know yo' sis "Keys" loves you hella much.

Man, sis' — do only things dat keeps us up when we feelin' down. I don't know about dem, but we got to keep ours around. We done looked and searched, and it's like we already found fresh dreads like hers, fresh cut like ours. There's some ninja, but they'll never be like ours: cute face, nice grill; like ours, 'hood rich, 'hood pusher, like ours! Sis', I love you and keep yo' head and don't come back, Sis'. Love —

-Turquoise and Yellow Thang

From The Beat: 'Hood pushers come back, and that's just a fact. So if y'all want to stay ahead of the pack, then find a better way to get paid so you never again have to be in here jockin' for a county snack. We mean do something to get legally paid, and surround yourself with friends who do the same. Getting out is cool, but staying out, finishing school, and getting a good j-o-b is what you both need to see.

A Day To Observe My Mama

My mama should be the person to have a special day like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and everybody else, because I think my mama did a lot for me and my sister and brother, through the bad and good! So my mama should have a special day, to me, on the real!

-Young Sponge Bob

From The Beat: Very cool! Now show her you care but staying out of here. And next Mother's Day, when you give her a card, give her a promise, you'll stay free, work legally and hard.

A Nobody Holiday

What it do The Beat Within, this Lil' E-d and the person I think deserves a holiday is Nobody because everybody already have holidays to celebrate so nobody really deserves a holiday but their birthday. I just think that too many things to ask for. To me, anybody in here don't deserve anything because they're in here.

When it's time for me to go I want everybody to remember me not as a bad ass person, but as a person who's very smart and intelligent. I don't want people to think of me as a thief or whatever they think 'cause I know I'm better than what people think bad of me. Alright, bye Beat.

-Lil E-d

From The Beat: It's a good thing that you know your own worth and believe yourself to be a good person; that means that you have enough self confidence to take control of your own life and make it something that you're proud of.

Three Answers, Three Questions

I could never forget when my daughter Nyah was born, March 30th, the same day as my older brother's birthday.

I want to be remembered as the boy that gets money by any means necessary and was the best father of my children, and a great restaurant owner of a five star restaurant.

I think that Jerm and Lil' Bob deserve holidays in remembrance of them, that's why we celebrate their birthdays and death days. I also believe that Malcolm X deserves one.

-Lawrence

From The Beat: We think that the idea of you being the owner of a 5 Star restaurants is one of the best ideas ever (especially if there's a Beat Within 20% Discount)... And also a great way to provide your family with a decent living. We even asked around to find out how you could make that dream come happen, and the first thing we heard you should do is try and get a job working as a waiter (or busser to start out with) at a restaurant nearby, and then to also take cooking classes. Did you know San Francisco has one of the best cooking schools in the country? Check with us if you're interested in learning more.

When I Go Away

When I go away...people should know that I was a solid lil youngster, but it ain't all about being solid, it's about getting knowledge and going to college, stop hitting licks and get legit and get yo grips.

-Lil' Damani

From The Beat: What will you study if you go to college? Any ideas? The thing about knowledge is that it just keeps expanding once you seek it.

For-Get-Full

I would never forget my nephew 'cause he held on to his life for five months straight. I know if that was me I probably couldn't do it. RIP Damarion

-Lil' Dizil

From The Beat: Some spirits are stronger than we can understand.

Did Everything a Youngsta Can

What I want people to know when it's my time to go is that I did everything a youngsta can do. Man, if it's my time to go, just know it was my time.

Meanwhile it's my time to shine! As long as my baby still here, I ain't trippin'. Because it's like I'm still here! But when I'm gone, my baby' mama gon' have a hard time, and my mama, too — but they will get over it.

-Kevin

From The Beat: It depends on what you mean by "get over it". Yes, they'll find a way to survive, but their hearts will never feel the same as when you were alive! So change what you do. Stop putting your life at risk in the street chasing your pay — get a legal j-o-b and show up everyday! Don't rush your time.

Forgetful

What it do Beat? Nothing right here. Something I can't forget is my bra Marcellus! Bra was hella cool and it's hard to forget that. Bam!! Just like that, bra was gone and I wan't even at home. In jail, mad as hell being on the run ain't fun, so I gotta stop havin fun playin with guns. RIP Cell

-Lil' Damani

From The Beat: Wouldn't it be a different world if everyone stopped having fun playing with guns? What kind of changes would we see in the world, other than a whole lot less violence?

A Good Rapper

I would like to known as a very good rapper from my neighborhood in East Oakland. Sometimes I do rap about bad things but I do have a lot of songs that have meaningful messages.

So for me and my brothers (two other people in the rap group) have made songs that are telling little kids not to worry about growing up ghetto, or growing up poor. I've made a song for my brother, Tommy Ebarria, that was killed — saying that he was one of God's young soldiers caught up at the wrong place, and how the devil was after him.

Then we do make a lot of good hyphy songs! So I can say that I'm very versatile, a chameleon in this rap business, able to adapt to anything.

-Eric

From The Beat: So write a rap on a positive tip and publish it here. You can still record it later. But now when you're telling youngsters not to worry about "growing up ghetto" — how do you define ghetto? 'Cause if you mean all that criminal dirt that will get you hurt if you don't get locked up first, that's no more ghetto than crack is black. Or put it this way, if you get sick, you don't think you are the sickness that's afflicting you. You want to get well as soon as possible so you can truly feel yourself. We hate the way the recording industry seems to encourage the worst in rap lyrics, because all lyrics are meaningful — but some mean your spreading disease and some work in your community to help keep "a ghetto youngster" healthy, safe and free. See?

What I Want People to Know

Before I go what I want people to know is how good I was treated by my mom and how bad I was treated by my dad. Well my dad was in and out of jail and my mom's been there for me no matter what happens. Man, what I want people to know is that I love my mom more than anything.

-D'marcus

From The Beat: We encourage you to tell your mom these things and hope that you don't wait to do so. Expressing appreciation and respect (and emotions in general) doesn't just make the other person feel good, it can also open things up in your own heart and mind and be a really enlightening act.

To Be Remembered

When I die I want people to know that I'm someone that you can trust and that I was someone who started my life off bad and ended it good.

-A success

From The Beat: Being someone that people can truly trust means a whole lot—do you have anyone in life who you completely trust in return?

Step Up Yo' Game

What it do? Lil' Rio back at it one time (know what I'm talkin' 'bout?), back up in this sad place. Man, I just wanna let y'all know, it's not cool to keep coming up in here — like I been here eight times!

I know some of y'all just not giving a what, because y'all been here maybe one, two or three times, but guess what? Y'all go' come back again, thinkin' it's all cool, not givin' a what! But it's go' be that one time when y'all gon' be a wrap! Judge go' wash that ass on the b (meaning block not blood game; I don't do dat stuff 'cause I'm just from my block, ya know?).

So step y'all game up. It's '07 and I'm gonna continue scraping on dubs! I'm gonna put my fam' on the map! Know what I'm talkin' 'bout?

-Lil' Rio

From The Beat: If you keep reppin' your block and trying to put yo'self or anyone else "on the map" — you'll not only be back, you'll get put away for years on end, for a fact! Your warnings are right, but you don't seem to be following the light you shine! If you plan is to stop selling drugs in order to pimp, then you're just sinking lower into the devil's grip — and you'll still pay for it with pain if you continue to seek ill-got gain.

Change

Well, today I'm going to talk about change. Today I choose the topic of change, because in just three days I'm going to be eighteen, this Friday.

I see it as a new chance for me to change my life around from that turf trash, 'cause it ain't getting me nowhere but back in jail. So I'm gonna just keep it solid.

-Twan

From The Beat: Short but sweet. Simple but true. We got major props for you, but now tell us what you specifically plan to do — and not do.

Loyal Man

Dae Dae was loyal man
He took care of his family
He owned his own business
He owned seven cars
Traveled around the world
He just got released
Yesterday to a group home.

-Lil' Dae Dae

From The Beat: Dae Dae left jail/Got out of his cell/Went somewhere more free/On the way to family/He kicked the old life/Had kids and a wife/Became a success/Well – you know the rest!

The Hall

never been to a place as cold as the hall
can't let it open dark holes or in it i will fall
confined away from home sweet home
look into the eyes of medusa and suddenly you're stone
square it up like a machine with buttons to push
want to be home with mary jane sticky icky purple kush
want to be home, got a family who wants me to be right
push my buttons, don't let me, i don't want to start a fight
it's late, my door opens for the last head call
never been to a place as cold as the hall

-Keith, the One

From The Beat: That purple kush must be messin' with your mind, 'cause whatever you were thinking and doing out there now has you in here doing time. A button ain't nothin' unless you hook it up to your rage, so don't let these fools rattle your cage — just stay calm and cool as a Beat sage who knows wisdom is not just a function of age but a choice to me made to avoid paying the price that otherwise must be paid. Quit and go legit, 'cause living in the hall ain't it!

In a Positive Way

What I want people to know when I go is that I was the greatest defensive tackle to ever play in the NFL! And that I was a great father to my child and a successful, wealthy man who is known in his neighborhood as a positive icon that was always there for the people in his community and the man who made a difference in a positive way.

-J

From The Beat: You go! Those are some pretty great goals to set for yourself in life. You know that if you achieve any one of them, you've been a blessing to the planet — well, an NFL all-star career only makes you a potential blessing; it's the rest that truly matters most. But an NFL career could spread that influence from coast to coast.

The Day My Grandmother Died

One thing I will never forget, is the day my grandmother died. My whole family got together at the hospital she was at.

She was on her deathbed for about eight days. When she died, I took it the hardest. She's been gone for a good two months.

-Grandma's Boy

From The Beat: How have you been handling your grief? Did you go wild and crazy, and that's why you're here now? Do you pray to please your grandma's spirit in heaven, watching over you?

Dirt Bag

Remember the days I was thizzin' off pills, slappin' yo' music, really in the bills, ready to go on one for my ninja? When I got out last time, they told me — and that news hurt. I buy fifths of Remy just for you to feel with me again. We remain forever young. Rest in peace.

-Keith

From The Beat: We deleted your crew call. Don't you see that bullshhh is what got your friend killed. It's sweet to think he can feel your high, but in truth that life style is why he died. For his sake, all your partners and your young children, it's time to quit the street grind. Make up your mind to find a legal shine. Until you change, your friend's angel in heaven will stay steady crying.

Remember Me

After I'm gone, I want people to know I was a good dad and a good goddad. I want my son to believe I was a good dad and my godson to think I was a good goddad.

I want people to know I was a real ninja and a hard-workin' ninja out to get it. I want them to be like, "He a strong, generous man." I want the ladies to remember me as a sex machine and a lover.

-Keith

From The Beat: We don't use the word "killa" in anyone's name, for what we hope will be obvious reasons: The Beat Within does not condone killing even if we don't judge killers. You feel? (As Jesus put it, "Forgive the sinner, not the sin.") Also, we urge you to get your life out of the line of fire, 'cause when you're gone, your fathering is done. A real ninja will see it's time to get out before he's a real dead ninja if he wants to be a good father and godfather to his children.

Haunt My Killer

When I go, I want people that killed me to know that I am going to be in their dreams, telling them that they are going to die for what they did. The ones who shot me and took my life will not sleep because they will be too scared. I am going to hunt the killer or killers that killed me.

But to tell you the truth, what I really want people to know about me is that I was a good person. And I want people to know that I knew how to get money. I want people to know that I was a good hustler. That's all I have to say.

-Lil' Sammy

From The Beat: If you want to be known as a good hustler, then you need to get yourself a legal hustle. And if you do, you won't have to worry about people trying to hurt you, 'cause with a legal hustle, you get the money without all that jealous muscle that makes the street grind a dangerous place to be — so get a legal hustle or a real j-o-b to live safe and long and free.

Welcome Back

welcome back to where you left
you said you wasn't comin' back
but you only lied to yourself
oh yeah, smack your lips
but in prison, smackin' yo' lips
earns you chips
but don't be mad
'cause you had second chances
so what happened to
parties and goin' to dances
but i guess you' like me
sure i love county food
so next time you leave
just keep it cool

-Dre

From The Beat: Ouch! You touched a nerve. Man, it's time to swerve and change your ways when the judge's word is Camp, group, or released today. You can still get mad, but get mad at the wrong-headed attitude you had, thinkin' you would get over forever. Ain't nobody on earth all that clever! Thanks for a good poem. Now take the message home with you and do right too.

Never Forget The First Time

I'll never forget the first time I laid eyes on my lady. It was a clear Saturday night, and it was at a high school football game. I remember it like it was yesterday: She was wearing a brown suede jacket with light blue pants.

But now I wish I could just see her instead of being in this hell-hole. I'll never forget the comfort I get from being next to her. Every time I think of her, my heart skips a beat. Tomorrow is my one-month anniversary with her (1/17/07), though by the time you read this, it will be almost two months. I pray I get out to see her and share my love.

-Eric

From The Beat: Nothing like young love to set a heart on fire! Now use that fire to feed your desire to change your life style. Then when you get out, you can stay out for longer than a short while — you can stay out forever and leave her never again till the end of time. Change your mind and quit the grind.

Rosa Parks and All

they should make
a holiday for Rosa Parks
and they should make
a holiday for all kids

-Anthony

From The Beat: Maybe a new sort of holiday, where instead of getting a day off from school — the school day is devoted to civil rights history, study and pressing issues of the day.

To All My Dead Partna's

To all my dead partna's, I just want to say, man, that you in my head all the time!

First is RIP Willie. Man, this dude was like my brother. We did everything together. Man, I don't know why you had to die!

To my ninja Chavo RIP, man, you should have stayed at home that night. Man, you did not have to go to your baby'mama's house! Man, I just want to tell you that I miss you, bro'.

And to my homie Danny RIP, man, bro', you showed me how to get money! Man you was like my big brother. Man, I miss you, bro'!

To my ninja Scooter RIP and White Mike RIP, I just want to tell you to stay up, bro's. I just want to tell you all that I'm keeping it solid for you now. I'm going to keep my head up and I will see you soon.

-Lil' Sammy

From The Beat: Danny showed you how not to get money if you want to live a long and healthy life. You say you don't know why Danny had to die! It was the way he lived his life, and Chavo, and Scooter, and White Mike — and now you! All the angels I heaven are warning you to change your ways before the fatal price has to be paid. Selling solids and hitting licks is not the way to make your pay but the way to get shot, yesterday, tomorrow or even today — if you keep "repping" your block that way. Get off the street. Get a j-o-b!

A Ninja Stuck to the Block

Wake up around eleven a-m to count my dough and coke/product. Step outside around noon. My ninjas greetin' me with blunts and 'Pohts. We talkin' about the cars that drive by, getting money and cussing at knocks that come up short.

Two p-m hit — go get some drank and go right back to the block; drank my Hen, smoke. Three thirty — come outside; mess with the females on the turf when they come outside; take 'em to the abandoned car. Three forty-five — smoke again and serve your customers.

Four p-m — police hit the block; cut out behind a house. Four fifteen p-m — go in the house, count dough and smoke. Four thirty-five — go to your potna' house next door, eat the ninja' cereal. Come back outside, serve your customers. Seven p-m, everybody goes to a female' house and chill and kick it with the girls. One a-m — go home and sleep.

The next day, do it all over again.

-Stretch

From The Beat: Living this life, you can expect to have a stretch of time to serve in the system, so long as you don't meet with some rival's bullet out on a mission first. You make it sound like it's oh so cool to stack cash while you smoke, drink, party, etc., but that moment when you run from the police seems like nothing day after day, till it turns out to be something. No, no, no — you're getting to old to live in this fool's paradise, where you trade either your future or your life for this illusion of living the high life — as high as you go, that's how low you fall. Fashow. So get yourself unstuck before you really run out of luck.

He Got Down

When I go, I want people to be like, "That was a real ninja. Dt was solid." But at the same time, I want other people to say, "He was a good person."

People that know me, know I get down. But the ninjas that don't like me and speak on me — forget you! To all that's locked up, keep it solid. I'm at Camp 'bout to get released — so it's good.

-Dt

From The Beat: We cut all of your crew and turf calls. Also where you personally attack others. You may have finished your program, but you didn't use it. You were just doing time. It's a shame 'cause you have what it takes to be "a good person" — but you've still got street fever.

Frankly Speaking

i use' to stick to the block
like eggs in a pan wit' no grease
use' to wake up every morning
with a plate full of steak
but i use knives for my beef
cold-hearted dude
felt no pressure under the heat
and every thug need love
so i use' to get hugs from the streets
i'd hit the block, get some stacks
all knocks on me
because if they wanted, i had it
so you could knock on me
played the field real well
headed for the goal line every time
hike on one two three set me free
pulled off the lots in a maybach on twenty-three's
with that bright light-skinned chick
with cheeks like alicia keyes
might as well put my face on the map
i'm bringin' the bay
shot-caller bring the play
either stand on the side
or get ran out the way
i was smashing
now i'm up in camp rehashing

-Frank

From The Beat: You're still in love with the myth that brought you to this kiddie-style Disneyland introduction to a system of retributive justice — justice as in retribution for your negative contribution to society. So stop flossin' your improprieties like you're all that and a bag of chips. You must have lost your grip, 'cause you're wearing pants with no pockets and someone else's shorts. We're not trying to diss you, just wake you up from your ghetto-fabulous fantasy vision — if that was how you profiled on the outs, it's time to make a decision. 'Cause the higher you go, the deeper you drop. So turn your intelligence toward harvesting a legal crop — get your pay the legal way and when you go free, go free to stay!

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this piece to all the homeboys and homegirls. I just wanted to say wassup to all in here doing time, and say — stay up, no matter what the situation you are going through. Keep your head up and remember that you are all in my thoughts. I also want to send my regards to those in San Mateo County Juvenile Hall.

-Wis

From The Beat: It's important to share love and encouragement, but truly to get through what they're facing, it's time to rethink the choices they've been making. Sometimes its better to let in the pain, if it helps you see what needs to be changed. Then rise again with a whole new plan: quit the bullshhh, go legal, get legit. Homie love that leads to death and incarceration is just as bad if not worse than hatin'.

Group Home

To the group home I go...

I hope I make it—I got till June 2nd to go back home for good or if my PO sets up a special court date. Do you guys think that's a long time? And it's January 16 now.

-Larry

From The Beat: We understand that even just a day being locked up can seem like too long, so we know that you must be nervous about the months you'll be spending in the group home. We also think that if you use the time to your advantage (set goals for yourself, be positive and work toward something) you'll look back on the time and think that it flew by. It's all in your approach. Good luck.

This Love

i love you girl, i love you not
i'm tryin'a get money, so i'm posted on the block
i know you feeling me, because i'm feeling you too
i'm tryin'a take you out, so i can see what you do
i'm tryin'a have you screaming my name
tryin'a have you and me both losin' our brain
but i look into your eyes and it's like a dreamy world
that's when i figured out that i had to make you my girl
from a young man to a special lil' lady
forever and ever, you'll always be my baby
through stormy weather, rain, sunshine, whatever
through good times and bad times, we will always be together
no matter what circumstances or consequences
i will always stick to your
and through the grief and pain, i hope you'll be mine
and your soft touch on my back, your soft whisper in my ear
makes me wanna shiver and curl up like a bear
my friend, my lover, also my girl
if i could give it to you, you would have the world

-Lil' Larry

From The Beat: We only changed the x-rated lines, but they had an edge of disrespect in them, too, though by the time you get rolling you're all cool. We fear, however that first line reveals the truth, and the rest is just you brushing up your player's game to see if you've improved. You definitely have some smooth lines, but now tell us something about this girl that has you sighing. Write a poem that shows it can be written about only her alone. Otherwise how will she know, you won't read the same words to the next girl you talk to on the phone.

Die For Love

What's good, Beat? This the homeboy Savage. I would want my family to know that I love them and that I would die (or kill) for my parents, brothers and homeboys.

I would want to be known as a homeboy that rides to the fullest and never leaves homeboys behind. Feel me? And for my family, they should know I love them, but I want them to know that I would do anything for my family! Late.

-Savage

From The Beat: If you would do anything for your family, then get out the savage street life your living. Your willingness to ride, to kill or be killed, doesn't protect your family — it puts them in danger, danger you bring on them by your actions and foolish thinking. They don't need you to kill anyone. If you love your family, live for them — live right for them! Make them proud of the positive, productive, responsible man you can be. All of what you wrote above, sounds more like hate than love.

Hello All!

This is Rick from Oakland. I would like to say what's up to all in the Hall or wherever you are — just be safe and do your thang in there or out there.

Me, I'm up here in Camp Sweeney. It's not that bad, but I still hate this stuff! At least you're getting home visits here, and they let you have a radio when you are a gold badge. To all that are in the Hall for a minute, keep your head up.

-Rick

From The Beat: Mike Jonez, which we cut out of your piece, knows he messed up big time, and he's written as much in The Beat. Do you read his pieces? Wishing him the best is cool, we do too, but learning a lesson from his situation is essential. If you do, you won't be telling readers to "do your thang" — not if you care about what consequences banging will bring! Keep your head up, yes. But open your mind if you want to be blessed.

At Camp

What's up, Beat? This Grim. I wanna say what's up to all. I'd never have thought that I would get locked up, but I was wrong.

I'm in here for a stolen car, DUI, and assault and battery. I lost the case, so I got sentenced to six-to-eight months at Camp Sweeney. If you coming up here — it's way better than the Hall! We get more rec' and more food here. Well, that's it 'till next time.

-Grim

From The Beat: Hmm, sounds like too much alcohol had you acting the fool. Was it the drink? If so, then you know what you need to do. If not, then maybe you were just taking so many risks that sooner or later it had to come to this. In which case, you also should know what you need to do. Either way, don't be the system's fool. After your release, play it cool. Finish school, get a j-o-b — and stay free!

The Kid Day

Declare a holiday, huh? Yeah! I got a day for you Beat readers to observe! This day is the one for "the One"! Yeah boy: The Kid! October first, my b-day! On the real, I'm the one!

But I know it's some real, live haters out there. So, "do you" — hate! I ain't mad, 'cause this would just show your status in "the game". By respecting somebody about what they/he be talking 'bout, gangsta-gangsta — this is a day to forget all haters and do you to the fullest.

Ride, get high, drunk, or whatever, without a care in the world, from tickets to money! 'Cause if you ain't representing money, what can you celebrate? But that's me and my thoughts. So if you a playa, stay solid and do you!

-Kid

From The Beat: It's too bad that you couldn't take this topic to a higher level, 'cause this fantasy will just keep you coming back to places like this in reality. If you can't raise you mind up off the street, then you're bound to repeat the cycle: stuck in the game, stuck with the same old pain. Why you gotta get drunk or high to do you? That's not you! You're way more than that. If you were to really "do you" — you'd stop acting a fool. When you succeed in graduating from the street, that's doing you to the fullest extent of your capacity to shine!

Out Next Month!

What it do, Beat? This Lil' T at Camp. I'm 'bouta get ready to get up out of here next month — so I ain't trippin' about nothin'.

I did about nine months altogether with the Hall included. But I'm finally 'bouta be free — but on probation — but it's good! I'm'a keep my head up, and this gon' be the last time you see Lil' T on a Beat Within page (unless it's another Lil' T). But all I can say is: I'm out! Feel me?

-Lil' T

From The Beat: Yeah, we feel you! But we wish you had more to say, like: what's your plan to insure this is the last time you're locked up? Just saying so, as hundreds and thousands before you show, doesn't make it so. What will you stop doing? What will you start doing? What will be different from before? — And don't just say, "I'll do it smarter." 'Cause everyone back in the system said that last time they were released. We're proud of you for doing a good program, for not running, but now is when it really gets serious. Freedom is a serious thing.

What I Love

What I want people to know when I die is that I loved Jack In the Box and Remy! I loved goin' to Jack In the Box and gettin' a double-bacon cheeseburger wit' some curly fries and some ranch sauce!

After I slam that, I'll go get me a bottle of Remy real fast! After I guzzle that, I go get some pills and be treal! Next thing I do is messin' wit' my potnas at Eastmont. I miss messin' wit' my potnas that got locked up — free them boys fast! I'm already up here at Camp with some of my boys though.

I'm about to cut, so stay solid! Free me and the rest of my boys.

-Dedo

From The Beat: The boyish enthusiasm of this piece would be all good, if it wasn't for where you are, along with so many of the boys from your 'hood. Clearly something is wrong, and just demanding that the system set you free, won't fix it. Food and drink can take your mind off your troubles, but it won't solve them. So if you love yourself, give some thought to where you're going with your life — and get up off the street grind if you really want to leave incarceration behind.

Missing You

it was all good before
they took me to camp
we would do everything together
we would go out to eat together
we would walk around the beach together
we would argue and fight all the time
we would go to the mall together
we would talk on the phone all night
now i'm in here and the only way
i can talk to her is through letters
now she thinks i'm cheating on her
but really i'm not
and i miss her a lot
but none of this matters but the fact
that i want her to realize that
i love her —
our love will last forever
no matter what happens
anthony and laila is forever

-Anthony

From The Beat: The main lesson you need to learn from all this, is no longer to put your freedom at risk by the things you do on the outs. Your relationship wouldn't be getting tested like this if you'd thought about where your choices were leading. We know you're not cheating, but it will take more than that to insure your meeting of hearts lasts forever. Get out the thug life or expect stormy weather. After your release, do right and stay free!

A Hundred Dollar Bill

It was just today. One of my staff came to my room for shower call. He opened my door, and there it was!
A hundred dollar bill! I was thinking, "Should I keep it or be a good friend?" So I chose to be a good friend.

-Lil' Pookie

From The Beat: There is a mansion in heaven, gleaming with gold ornament, reserved in your name, for the message you just sent. Meanwhile, here on earth, if you can stay this honest in all you do, your days of incarceration will be soon be through.

When It's My Time To Go

When it's my time to go
I'll pass by people that I know
And all I'll say is what's up.
When it's my time to go
I'll let my people's know
That I love all of them though.

-Love To All

From The Beat: Sounds like you love a lot of people who will miss you so much when it's your time to go. Live long and prosper!

Unforgettable

I will never forget the day my sister died Oct. 30, 2004 because it was my other sister's birthday and my cousin's. The reason I will never forget that is because that was the day before Halloween and because that was my little sister who was hella close to me. That day was the most painful day of in my life. Also the reason I will never forget her is because that is my only girl that has half of my heart. RIP Rhonda.

-Maurice

From The Beat: Losing a sister or brother hurts so much! Part of you will always be missing with her. Thank you for telling The Beat about this tragic loss. Take good care of your heart.

Talk, Talk, Talk

What's up with it The Beat? I just wanna talk 'bout these fake ninjas in the hall. They wanna talk and run they mouth like they about something. But they know on the outs it's a whole different story. Ninjas ain't gone bust a grape.

-Lil' Memeey

From The Beat: What are you focusing so much on what everyone else is saying and focus on yourself, and what you need to do on the outs?

Holiday for Moms

What's up wit it Beat? Yeah it's me Lil' G. I'm still here waitin' to cut. But anyways I think if anyone should get a holiday it should be my mother. Because she is hella smart, got a good education, is a cool mom. Plus she tries here hardest. To my mom Corazon!

-G

From The Beat: Luckily there are already holidays just for moms. But we appreciate that you took this space to give your mom some props and love.

Tattoos

When I look on my arm I see Mary and Ioyana.
People I love not all the above,
when I get out can't be on the run wit' nothing to lose
which one you gone choose?
Stay at that group home or run and get on.

-Lil' Damani

From The Beat: You seem to be faced with some choices—making the wrong move could make the next years of your life an extension of your present reality. As time goes on though, running only shortens the leash and you have less and less freedom, fewer and fewer choices. We think you know that the right decision means doing your time and never running from what will almost always catch you.

A Cool Homie

What I want people to know is that I am a homeboy that put it down — and did a lot of things for the homies, like a couple of homeboys that didn't have a place to stay, I took them to my place, and some homeboys that let me stay at their houses when I didn't have a place to stay, that's a real homeboy.

All homeboys show love to each other and never leave a homeboy hanging. Sometimes homies be hatin' on the black or white homies, and I don't know why homies do 'cause it ain't even cool. So basically I want to be known as a homie that was hella cool and never hated on anyone.

-Lil' Napps

From The Beat: That homie love can be very cool, giving someone a place to stay, sometimes even buying school clothes or whatever. But leading each other into danger, riding a homie to his death just for the excitement. That stuff is not cool. Hating on so-called rivals is not even cool. But the love is! We hope you don't have to learn the hard way how quickly it disappears if you hit some real trouble with the law, etc.

Respect

I want people to know that I was a person that had respect for anybody. But I also was crazy.

-Devante

From The Beat: Having respect for anybody is a respectable quality. You will go far, unless you are truly crazy, which we think you are not.

Grandpa

The day I will never forget is, when my grandfather died because he was like my father.

-Sisco

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing this personal memory with The Beat! Tell us of a time the two of you spent together?

Free

let me go
it's time to get free
and get back to the av'
my house where i belong
it's missin' me out there

-Lil' E

From The Beat: As we type this response, we just saw you in Camp Sweeney with a second chance of getting home first on HV's and then a clean release. Free yourself from enslavement to the street, and you'll stay free after your release.

Rest In Peace Big Joe

What's up, Beat? This the homie Lil' Napps, about to give thought to this topic about being forgetful — but I am not forgetful at all about one thing: I will never forget when my homeboy got shot! I was locked up

My homie's name was Big Joe. I was locked down and could not go to the funeral — and that was one time I regretted what I did to get locked up, because I really wanted to go to the funeral. But I miss my homie Big Joe! I am about to cut this short, Beat. I send the utmost respect to my dead homie: Rest In Peace, Big Joe.

-Lil' Napps

From The Beat: Not much worse than to lose a close friend when you're locked up and can't even go to the funeral to show your love and respect. On the other hand, if you had been out and free, maybe you'd be dead, too! Make Big Joe's death meaningful by learning from it — the life style you're living is really nothing more than an early-death style unless you're "lucky" enough to be locked up when the time comes that the bullets fly from the laughing mouth of the devil that made you all those promises about good times and love forever. Break your pact with the devil before the devil breaks you down to leaking out your life way before God's appointed time.

Waiting On A Home

Well what's up Beat, how you guys been doin'? Me, I've just been in the hall waiting for a group home to come interview me tonight.

One in L.A. interviewed me, and he didn't accept me and two weeks ago ROP Nevada and Redding a wilderness program interviewed me and I refused both of them.

Well now I'm just waiting to get the fudge out of here so I could smoke some ports. I send my utmost respect to all in the hall. Late.

-Lil' Box

From The Beat: What were your reasons for refusing ROP and Redding? We are sure you have good ones, but we are curious what they are so others reading The Beat can learn from you. We hope when you get out you do more than just smoke and chill!

What you want people to know when its my time to go

I want people to remember me as a responsible young man, to remember me as a millionaire and a boss.

-Baby

From The Beat: We hope you do become a responsible millionaire, but it's not as easy as it sounds. What's the plan?

Forgetful

I could never forget my birthday because that's a tradition to everyone. I have a lot of fun with my grandma. I would never forget my granny she is a very important person to me.

-Jamar

From The Beat: Tell us about the fun you have with your granny. Why is she so important?

Holiday for Tupac

Tupac Shakur should have a holiday because he was a good artist, worked hard, and made millions. If he was still alive, he would have made billions by now. People still talk about him 'til this day.

-Devante

From The Beat: Tupac's memory is alive in The Beat!

Haven't Been Home Since 2005

What's up Beat? Me? Shhh, just chillin' while I'm lightweight stressin' because I don't know when the fudge I'm getting out of this juvenile jail. And I've been here for seventy-seven days — but really I've been here for eighty-six days because I was only out for three days! The last time I was home was 2005! So right now, I'm just chillin', thinkin' about when I'm going home. Probably 2008 is when I'm going home free, but I don't know.

I'm kinda calmin' down. Now I'm thinking about how bad other people got it, like other people are doing life wit' no chance of parole! But it's still kinda hard for me to keep my head up through these tough times. I kinda want to run from da group home they send me to, but I don't think it's fair to my mom to suffer just because I want to be out on the streets having fun.

Well, I ran out of time, so I got to go. A'ight, fam'! And to all up in Camp, stay solid. Keep yo' head up. The Beat don't put names no more, but you know who you are! And all the others, do good and stay through it. Late.

-Porkey

From The Beat: "I kinda want to run from te group home they send me to, but I don't think it's fair to my mom to suffer just because I want to be out on the streets having fun." Man, that's true both while you're in that group home and after you're finally back home with your mom! Paste those words on the mirror or your dresser or bed post — and read them every single day, at the group home and after you've done your program, too. Okay?

About To Leave

head to the pleasure
felt this sentence
as she lusted before i faked
on divinity
and she would have let me
asked a question
of my god about the clouds
and the rain
tried to rush to the door
tryin' to make it
to the fame

-Jacob

From The Beat: With all your intelligence, you lack the maturity of wisdom. Forget the fame, just make the right decision — rain or shine keep a do-right frame of mind.

That Girl

she was like a fruit
something sweet
but like my granny
always neat
but like a gambler
always trying to cheat
but on the low
she was a control freak
i tried to run away
but i couldn't get far
'cause when i turned to leave
she had my car
but hate is love
and love is hate
but i promise
she and i will never date

-Dre

From The Beat: Hate and love can both be passionate obsessions, but they're no more equal than good deeds versus transgressions. Love isn't just a feeling, it's a way of dealing — giving with an open heart. And hate ... well, we agree you two ought to part — but what about your car?

My Holiday

I would have a Thizz Nation Day, everybody will get a day off and get on eighteen and over. They're going to do it regardless but give a thizz day to celebrate, if they want to go to the club and go dumb.

-Lil' E

From The Beat: If Thizz only just meant dancing, laughing, and having fun, we would be so into a holiday like this. But right now there's too much messed up stuff connected to 'thizzin'". There are fights, there's killings, there are people ending up in the hospital for mixing their illegal pills with alcohol ... there' are accidents at the sideshows. There must be a way to get the spirit of the dancing and the music without all the sorrow that comes later. Any suggestions?

Regret New Years Day

I never will forget the day I ended up in here juvenile hall on January 1, 2007. I ain't going to get into all the details how I got here, but I just regret that day and wish I could take it back. Also I hope I can be released soon.

-Anthony

From The Beat: If you were in the same situation tomorrow, would you do the same regrettable things? Or did you learn a lesson that will help you next time?

I Am Waitin'

I am waitin' to get out so I can be wit' my family...
I am waitin' to see my girl 'cause I miss her.
I am waitin for my dad to come and get me to go home
I am waitin' to be able to continue my life but on the outs
I should be gettin' out today so
I am not goin' to be writin' The Beat anymore
I am going to be with my girl
I love you
Joanna

-Maniac

From The Beat: We hope that life on the outs is treating you well (and also that YOU are treating life well). Keep us posted on your new adventures!

The thing I'm tired the most of is being tired. Because I don't have the right mind set anymore. Not knowing what's going to happen, or when. Not knowing where I'm going or how long.

Release

i need a release
so i can be free
and get my money

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Free yourself from that fast money on the street and you'll stay free from the system after your release.

Almost Gone

This the homie Soldier. I'm still up over here at Camp. I've been here six months and two days. I get out in the next month: February. I'm tired of this trash.

It's about that time when I get to leave. I served my time already. Hopefully they ain't tryin' to slap me with thirty days — or sixty! I'm gonna be hella mad if they do, and I'm gonna go bad! 'Cause I need to get home to the wifey; she missin' me! Ya feel?

Well, I'm out. I send my love. I'm gone.

-Soldier

From The Beat: We're scared for you. You seem to have lost focus on what you need to do to stay free after your release, and at the same time seem to be building up pressure within yourself like a bomb waiting to explode. For example, if you were to "go bad" — it wouldn't bring you any closer to getting your release but just the opposite. But that's not the point we're trying to make. It's more like a vibe you're giving off that has us worried, just like we were worried about your brother. Stop the cycle! Make some responsible plans and follow through.

Lost

The day I will never forget is when I lost my cousin, Kim. He was 20 years old and he lost his life over a female.

-Devante

From The Beat: It's a tragedy when one is killed over love, when there is so much love to go around. Life is so precious, be smart about who you chill with and the things you do!

My Legacy

I want to be remembered by the person who had the cleanest car and I want to be a baseball player, and how intelligent I was.

-Jamar

From The Beat: We hope you're intelligent enough to know that having the cleanest car won't get you real love or real success in life. It's a fun hobby, but keep your eye on the real stuff of life too.

My Hopes For Release

What's up with it Beat? It's your boy Sisco man this shhh ain't cool. I just got released a month and two weeks ago but this time when I get a release I hope I go to camp or E M.

-Sisco

From The Beat: We wish you all the success you deserve! Good luck out there, and remember how easy it is to get violated, so play it safe.

I'm Tired

I'm tired of being here.
I'm tired of these fake friends.
I'm even more tired of some of these fake ass staff
I'm tired of being told what to do, when to do it and how.
I'm tired of bein' smashed on by staff and not being able to do anything about.
The thing I'm tired the most of is being tired.
Because I don't have the right mind set anymore.
Not knowing what's going to happen, or when. Not knowing where I'm going or how long.
It's so stressful, but all I can do is wait and try to change

-Craz

From The Beat: It's good to see that you took this exhaustion and wrote it down on a piece of paper instead of going off on staff and just giving up on yourself. You said it best: "The thing I'm tired the most of is being tired." What have you heard since writing this, about where they'll send you? And is it better or worse than you expected? Plus: what is it that you most want to change? (Not in your personality, just in you're actions)

Them Snack Wraps Be On Hit

My favorite food is MacDonald's
But them snack wraps be on hit
Know what I mean?
Yea, I be havin' mom bring me up some of that
Yah mean?
But, yea
Holla at yo' boy

-Young Ant LCRS

From The Beat: It's great that you've got your mom bringing you some treats on family day down at the Ranch!

I Love You

I love you, but I don't know you
I feel and I wanna trust you
I just wanna say I love you,
I'm you' cream
Every time I think abut you
My temperature start to rise
Me and you together
It don't get no better
I like peaches with cream
So we was meant to be

-Husband

From The Beat: Sounds delicious! So peaches and cream is your favorite desert! Very nice poem Husband. We had no idea you were such a beautiful, natural poet. Why don't you send this poem for Valentine's Day?

Z Is The Name

My name is Z, for the people that don't know. But I came to rap with y'all, talk to y'all, speak to y'all. I be in the concrete.

-Z LCRS

From The Beat: So where are your raps? Let's see them! Anyone can say hello in The Beat!

Forgetful

I don't be having a hard time remembering things. It's just what I want to do and when I want to do it. Like I could not forget something, but I just don't feel like doing it. Or, sometimes I would forget something, or what was supposed to happen that day I would remember at the last second. If it was important though, off top, that's gone be remembered. But if it's something small, it has the highest chance to be forgotten about.

Sometimes if it's one of those boring days, I be wantin' to remember anything to make something in the day go smooth.

-Ant U2

From The Beat: It sounds like you pick and choose what you want to forget. Do you think that's good, or bad? Have you ever gotten yourself into a situation (big or small) because you forgot something? What's the biggest thing you've ever forgotten?

"I Was A Good Person"

What I want people to know when it's my time to go is that I was a good person. That I was a respectful young man, or man. Because some people I might just act different in front of, or how I talk to people. I would just want them to know that that person was not really me. That it was just an act.

-Tay U2

From The Beat: Why do you act different in front of different people? We understand that you're still attempting to find your true self, but if people can't accept you for who you are, then they have a problem. But if you act in a way that does not truly show your goodness, then you have a problem. People will know you not by what you tell them about yourself, but by what you show them about yourself. The problem with putting on an act about who we are is that the act can become who we are. Think about it.

Spitting Habit

I need to break my spitting habit. I got used to spitting when I was chilling with friends, because they smoke, so I just started doing it a few years ago. I wish I could break it, but it's just too hard. Maybe that could be my New Year resolution.

This one time I also spit at this lady in front of a store, because I turned my head and spit, but I didn't see her coming, so I almost spit in her face. That was one of those embarrassing moments. Lol.

-Weapon LCRS

From The Beat: Spitting is such a disgusting habit. We do hope you have the strength to break it too. How's it going thus far?

My Life Can Be Good In 2007

My life can be good in 2007 because I can go to school, have some fun, and go home to my mom and dad. My life in 2007 will be fun because I can be with my mom and dad at home, not at the hall. I can do the good things, like going to school with my brother and some of my friends. 2006 was not good because I came to the hall four times. 2006 was not fun because I did not see my mom and dad.

-Lil' One U2

From The Beat: We get worried when we read that you came here four times in one year, because it says you didn't learn your lesson — at least not the first three times. Didn't you tell yourself each time before that you wouldn't come back, that you would stay home with those that love you? And yet, you did come back. So what can you tell us to convince us that now things will be different? It's not enough just to say, "I want to stay home with my family." You have to carefully examine the reasons that led you back here four times, and truly understand what it is you have to sacrifice (give up) so that you can keep the promises you have made to yourself and to your family. They deserve nothing less

Almost Home, I Hope

I hope I make it home. What's up? This Playboy, just tryin' to be easy and get over with this program, 'cause I just got a couple of days and I wanna see my mom and family and also one of my girls. You know how I get down. But you know there are people tryin' to talk shhh to you, but they all already know what's up with me—how I do it, and when I do it and they know they love it. But when I get out, I just gonna be easy with all that shhh out there, 'cause I don't want to come back to jail.

So I just gonna work, be with that family at home, and with all them girls, you feel me? So this Playboy. It out. One love.

-Playboy LCRS

From The Beat: How do you plan to stay away from the bull on the streets? What type of work do you hope to have? What about school? What's going to be your biggest challenge?

Salvadorian Food Is My Favorite

My food--my culture and pride. What's up to all in the "Y," prison, Log Cabin Ranch and YGC? ThisPlayboy, from that city, doing my time here at the Ranch. Just try to stay cool and not say nothing to all talking shhh. But to get to the point--I want to talk about that food that I love and like.

So my favorite food is Salvadorians' sopas and also pupusas, 'cause I'm Salvadorian and that's that food from my country. I always go to the Mission to this one restaurant. Most of the time I go with one of my girls, but most of the time I go with my family. I also got the restaurants on my own block. You know we do it and get down.

-Playboy LCRS

From The Beat: Sounds good, yet you don't tell us where the restaurant is we should try. How would you describe sopas and pupusas to someone who has never eaten any? How is Salvadoran food different from Mexican or comida from other Central American countries? Do you also like food from all over Central America?

Misery Lane

I gotta think like a father
'Cause now I gotta daughter
I can't make the average moves
I gotta be smarter
Got my ear to the street
A lot of people get slaughtered
What it amount to
Tryin' to picture the world without me
And I know that will got to go
And to live forever is impossible
We all got a date in the chronicle
Ninjas falling back to back like dominos
I seen Lou go and soon enough
Ma ninja, Roach, got stuffed
That shhh too much
You can't go through
What I already been through
I already been through
What you already been through
I'm standing on the lane
Smoking game
In the rain
An' that's why...
RIP Dirty and Roach

-Unknown LCRS

From The Beat: You know and have witnessed the pain and ugliness of the street life. You realize now with a daughter in our life you need to make a big change, the question is, will you? Or will you continue to be a selfish little boy, playing a street game you cannot win at, 'cause in truth, no one wins. In the end you don't win, your daughter will not win and your family sure as hell will not win. Let it be known, "Unknown" that the time is now to be a leader and to make a change. You have the leadership to make a difference, if you choose to.

Last Week To The Ranch

You know me, Playboy, here at the Ranch. My last week-- trying to be cool so I can make it home, so I can be with my mom and family and the girls, homies, and the people who love me. But what I'm plan to do is work, take my placasos (tattoo) off, 'cause I wanna prove to some people that think that I'm not goin' to change. But they don't know me. I do my thing--get money and girls all day. Now forget all this chavalas, get money and I'm out.

-Playboy LCRS

From The Beat: Hope by the time you read this you are still doing "cool." What's you plan on staying busy, free of the system? How do you plan on taking off the placasos? Who doesn't believe you can change? And why do you suppose they believe that? Tell us about Playboy, the real deal! We encourage and support our effort in breaking the stereotypes that come with the life you have lead.

I'm A Grown Man This Time Around

Huh, what it do? It's your boy, J-Stub, sitting in this Ranch, doing this weak ass. I am about to be back on the block again real soon, doing me, like I do always, back on the block again. This time they can't stop me. I am a grown man this time around. So, do your time. You will be back soon.

-J Stub LCRS

From The Beat: You write that you're headed straight back to the block as soon as you're free--what will be different? Isn't whatever you do out there just as illegal and dangerous as it always is? While you have some time to think, why don't you consider a whole lot of alternatives, in order to keep yourself free and safe? Never too late.

New At The Ranch

What's up with The Beat? Man, it's ya boy, G, and I just got to the Ranch. It's coo', though. It better than juvenile hall, but it still not home.

-G LCRS

From The Beat: Why is the ranch cool? Tell us about your experience thus far. What are you learning? What's your plan? We are listening!

Who I Really Was

I want people to know who I really was when I go. Not just a boy from a set, but someone who wanted to be something and just didn't know what. Don't treat me different because I am locked up in here. Some people think 'cause we in here we bad, but it's not true. We try, but the things we do is against the law. So we end up here in YGC stuck in a room. Or at a set with a gun, or smokin' weed. We doin' it 'cause we lost friends, or family, and we do what we do. Don't hurt us, help us. You know what I am sayin'. Stay cool

-Guan U2

From The Beat: The one thing we find most important about what you've written are the words, "Don't hurt us, help us." That tells us that you recognize somewhere deep down that what you're doing is not right, even for yourself, and that you need help to change. The problem with telling people to remember you in a certain way is that it doesn't work — any more than our telling you to stop packing or smoking weed works! It's what you DO that you will be remembered for, and not what you say. So, what will you do to get people to know you how you want to be known? And what help do you need in order to do it? We know you all try, but sometimes you give up too soon and resort to old, unproductive ways — ways that lead not just to lock-up, but to people making judgments about you that hurt you. Before anyone can help you, you have to begin helping yourself. There's help out there (and a lot of people trying to provide it), but you have to truly want it, and then reach out and find it.

Forgetful

It's crazy how someone doesn't remember the important stuff in the past. I'm the type of person that forgets simple things, but serious things I never forget. I would never forget the day I got shot at, 'cause after that day I always was thinkin' 'bout that. I would also remember to get revenge if I ever found out who did it, or if ya boi already knew. I also learned to watch my back 'cause my homies ain't gone have my back every second. That's why I stay with it from now on.

-9 U2

From The Beat: Getting shot at is definitely a hard thing to forget. But if you had been packing on the day, what would have happened? Not just the first thing, but after that, then what? Play it out in your mind all the way to the end, and tell us where you see it ending. Like so much of what we read, your thoughts are totally about you, and not about those who love you — and what happens to them every time you go to the block, every time you use that weapon, every time you give your freedom away to a heartless system. What about them? Do you owe them anything, or just yourself and your boys? They shoot; you shoot. They kill; you kill. You take out one of "them," they take you. A mother weeps, and then another, and then another... And we're back at the beginning. Who will have the courage to break this cycle? Apparently not you. We hope for a more mature view of the world (which is so much greater than the block you occupy or the set you rep). You may never get there, but we're hoping...

Remember Me By The Life I Lead

When I leave this world, I want people to remember me by the life I lead. Mother and father will remember me from when I was a baby, speaking at my funeral about how sweet, smart and caring I was. Then one of them will speak about how bad I became over the years. My lil' bra will talk about all the good things we did together. Playin' the game, teaching him how to hit at football practice. He also will speak about how he missed me when I was in jail. How I missed his last season of football and his last birthday.

The homies will remember me as the ninja right, because of my active behavior, love and how outgoing I was. How they could call me at anytime of need and I will be there. They will remember me for how outspoken I am. They will also always remember me because I stay in the gangsta groove.

-Dubb U2

From The Beat: You show a good, well-rounded picture of how people will remember you — but only if you died today. You are making the mistake that every child makes, which is to think that his life today is the way things will always be. We promise you that things you think will always be, will not always be. That what you think today, you will not always think. We promise you (though we know you don't believe us) that change is inevitable — the only question being whether you make it happen or whether circumstances impose it on you. People will remember you by the life you lead, just as you say you want them to. But will your parents remember that you loved the streets and your boys more than you loved them (because of your own actions)? Will your brother remember that you left him behind (because of your own actions)? Will the streets remember you as that "right ninja" who stayed in the gangsta groove? Only for a minute, until the next youngster steps into the spot you once occupied. You will be remembered by the choices you make (or allow to be made) from this point forward, because life moves forward always. It is not frozen in this moment. Make the most of it.

I Am Who I Am

What's good, Beat? This is Billitant. I'm still out here in San Francisco jail. I go to court the 7th of next month. To all the brahs, this ain't goin' last long. We all goin' get out sooner or later, so keep it lit, no matter what.

Today I'm goin' to talk 'bout who I am, because nowadays, people always callin' people so many names. 'Cause I think words can't name people, only describe you. Because when people call other people criminal, some people be feeling bad, but I'm here to tell y'all that's not what you are. Just be what you know you really are. Keep it lit. It's our time. Look at our watch.

-Billitant U3

From The Beat: We hope you don't have to learn how seriously you're setting yourself up to be slammed down again (because the system can always assemble far more power to suppress you than you can assemble to resist) in the worst kind of ways. This really says nothing to us, at all, though we're clear that you aren't speaking to us but past us. Do you know what the phrase, "Too clever by half" means? Do us a favor. Take the one phrase that you wrote, "It's our time," and explain just that. Your time for what? How is it your time? What are you doing to make it your time? We can tell you one thing for sure, not everyone locked away gets out, whether sooner or later. Some never escape the prisons of their minds.

Make Choices

Life is simple — make choices and don't look back.

-Bin Laden U3

From The Beat: This is nonsense. Life is not simple for anyone. And there's no way not to look back. Everything is past. In fact, only the past exists at all. The future is yet to be written, and unless you look back and learn from the past, you'll just keep finding yourself living the same mistakes over and over. (We take time with this great publication, so when you don't — when you treat it like an afterthought, when you are too lazy to write more than nine words (!), you can expect us to begin our response: This is nonsense.)

Forgetful

I want to forget that I ever came to this piece of shhh, for real. It's real fugazie up in here. Yo, for real! I need to get out of here. I'm tired of being told what to do, when to sleep, when to eat, be for real. Yo!

-Bad-Boy U3

From The Beat: We'll believe that you're tired of being told what to do, when to sleep, and when to eat if we don't see you here again. If we do, then we'll know you weren't tired of it quite enough!

Next Move

-Quez U6

From The Beat: You're being lazy, Quez. You wrote almost the exact same piece in last week's Beat. Stealing words — even from yourself — is plagiarism, and we're not publishing the same piece twice. Putting in such little effort will result in very few rewards, so it's you that you're cheating.

I'm A Caring Person

I want people to remember me by something I did before I passed away is that I'm a caring person and every person I knew will thank me for helping them liking to do everything they need for their importance. So that's what I want people to remember me by.

-Mikoo U3

From The Beat: Mikoo, you can do better than this (you have done better than this). Don't let the laziness of those around you affect you. Tell us what this means! Give us examples. When have you helped others? What did you do? As a caring person, what do you care about? This business of writing a couple of sentences (so that you can get your Beat) just won't do! It doesn't help you, and it doesn't help us. If you are a caring person, it's time to start caring about yourself and your future.

Find Your True Friends

Don't cry. God will guide you.
Find your true friends, not those who set you up.
Girls ain't worth the time in prison.

-S Surge U3

From The Beat: We almost didn't print these little quotes. They do not equal even a bad Beat piece, which requires thought (there's none here), and an explanation that gets below the surface. This is only surface, and not very original surface at that. You started to write that "everything that happens on earth is meant to be," but you crossed it out and substituted this. You shouldn't have. Explaining that would make an interesting piece, if you decide to put the effort required to make it an interesting piece. In the meantime, all we have are slogans that really don't mean much. If it's true that "God will guide you," then what does it mean that God has guided you here? How does guidance work, if the person being guided isn't willing to go? Did God guide you to those friends who set you up? If not, then how do you find "true" friends? The last bit about girls is just childish nonsense (and the rest isn't much more). If you would rather not participate in a Beat writing program — and the word to focus on is "participate" — then stay in your room!

What I Want Them To Know

I want people to know that I was a good father and I took care of my children. I was a good husband and I did what I had to do for my children. Peace out.

-Na-Na U3

From The Beat: If you already have children, Na-Na, then what does it mean to you to be "a good father?" Can a good father abandon his children by allowing himself to be taken from them? Is handing them money what makes someone a good father? If you are a good father (and we hope you become one, because you can't possible be one inside this place), then you will be remembered as one — not because you describe yourself that way, but because you handle yourself that way.

Have You Ever?

-Pooh Bear U4

From The Beat: We don't know why you think you're cheating The Beat by putting down someone else's words as your own. The words you chose are really wonderful... Unfortunately, you didn't write them, someone else did. Since The Beat is your publication, you're only cheating yourself when you take someone else's writing and claim it as your own. That is called plagiarism. Don't do it!

My Struggles

My struggles is very pontificatable
Got shot at, burned, and sliced
But my struggles make me think I'm able
Make me want to change
Every time I try to, it feel strange
Because the situations I been through
It makes me feel strong
Every which way I turn makes me feel wrong
My struggles is very deniable
It's kind of hard to admit
That I'm the cause of this shhh
I hated the females I was with
Because God was the one by my side
To keep me alive
If I would've stayed there twenty more minutes
I would've died
Now I've learned to put my struggles behind me
Since I'm in a place like this
It gives me a lot of time to think

-Rosevette U5

From The Beat: Yes, you do have a lot of time to think. So, what are you thinking about? How will you thank God for being by your side and keeping you alive? What do you think you owe to Him — and to yourself?

My Role Model

I used to live with my auntie because my mom passed away when I was nine. She had cancer. My dad died in San Quentin, so I went to live with my auntie, but I messed up, so I lived with my brother. But I messed up again, so I got sent to a lot of foster homes.

My cousin used to pick me up, body slam me on the bed, mess with me when I was young. He had been through a lot of jails and got all kinds of stuff. Now he in Cambodia and he can't come back. I look up to him, because he taught me a lot.

-Lil' Kut U5

From The Beat: What does a cousin who body slams you and messes with you have to teach you? Whatever you learned, apparently it didn't keep you from messing up. What will keep you from messing up when you get another chance to make your own decisions? Do you want to join your cousin in Cambodia?

The Day I Found Out

Something dat I'll never forget is da day when I found out dat I had a son. But really didn't find out till two years later. I was like, "Hell nah, dat ain't mine."

Everybody was tellin' me dat it looked like me. But I still don't know 'cause I'm locked up and ain't talked to no one 'bout it. I can't wait to get out and get a blood test to see if it's mine. If it ain't mine, I'ma cuss her out and give her one!

-Lil' Spitta U4

From The Beat: We're more interested in learning what you plan to do if it IS yours... You're clearly not ready to be a father because the first requirement for that job is being responsible. By having unprotected sex, you show that you are not yet responsible (and you're now dealing with one of the possible consequences... and there are many far worse ones). By allowing yourself to get locked up, you make it even more obvious that you're not ready for the serious job of fatherhood. We hope that if this child is yours, it kicks you into a more mature state of mind than the one you've revealed so far.

When It's Time To Go

If I left, I would tell my family that I'm sorry I been bad a couple of years, and I will miss you guys. And I would say thanks for taking care of me for all these years. I'm going to be with my grandma in heaven when it's time to go.

But I would die like a thug. I been raised in my 'hood, and that's where I might pass away. I love my 'hood, I would let my family bury me there. My family was raised around there. so my mom was ghetto. She was down for her block. She didn't really have time for me when I was a baby. She would be posting around the 'hood.

My gramma passed away September 2005. She was the one that raised me. She died of cancer. I was pretty sad I tried to forget about her, so I got jumped into the gang, and now I'm here in jail.

I pray for God to get me out for I could spend more time with them before I die, but when I get out I'm going to do better in life and pass my program so I could spend more time with my family.

-Whisper U4

From The Beat: Dying "like a thug" means that you were living like a thug. So, what makes you think you'll be joining your grandma in heaven? Does everyone go to heaven, no matter how they lived or what they did in life? Thanking your family for taking care of you is important, but how are you thanking them now? Do you want to be the kind of father that you say your mother was, never having enough time for your own children because the block means more to you than they do? (From now on, if you don't include your name on your piece — first and last — we won't be able to publish it in The Beat.)

Remembering My Great Grandpa

I will never forget the time that I seen my great grandpa. He died last year. I will always dream about him at night when I go to sleep. So my grandfather died and they remember him as a real cool person.

And that's how I wanna get remembered when I die as a good person. A ladies man ya dig and a smart guy made smart choices. I'm leavin' outta here January 26 and I ain't comin' back.

-Icy U7

From The Beat: The fact that you are here tells us that the choices you made before were not all that smart. So what different choices are you going to make when you get out to keep the promise of never coming back? How can you honor your great grandpa by what you do?

If You Can't Stand The Heat, Get Out The Kitchen!

Man, what's the word, bird? Dis DM. I'm tired of these "I ain't in it-ass people." That's all I'm sayin' 'cause when people get around they friend, you know that they put that mask on, I'm just here to say that you don't gotta put it on if you really ain't ready for this beefin' stuff leave it alone, 'cause shhh, really I don't want this beefin' shhh. I just wanna get money and get girls.

But you know it's always ninjas that hate, so you gotta get them out the way, and really that's how all beef start. Or it's over some girls with that messy shhh, go back and forth. So ta me I don't think the kills gone stop "straight-up," or they might for a minute and they gone get started again.

-Dm U4

From The Beat: Are you saying you never put a mask on? So, when you stand before the judge, you tell it straight? We can't believe that! We know you are as respectful as you can be in that setting, because it would be stupid and self-defeating to be completely honest and tell the judge what you're really thinking. So, maybe you're not ready for "this beefin' stuff either, because what comes with it is this: a bunch of strangers treating you like you're a slave, making you wear other boys' underwear, making you shower with only boys and eat food you would never eat at home, etc. And it only gets worse from this little kiddie jail. Are you ready for that? If not, then leave it alone! There are other ways to make money than to risk your entire future.

Once Again, I'm Back...

What it do, Beat? I would like to say wassup to everyone working at The Beat! Sorry I had to say hi in here. And wassup to my. Friends.

Well, I don't have much to say. I'm back for a warrant and transferring from Coco County. My warrant was for AWOLing from the airport. I know what I did wasn't smart, but I felt it was the right thing if my PO wouldn't listen. Now they know they were wrong and I get to pick a group home placement or ranch.

This would have been so much easier if they would have listened the first time. But yeah, I'll be out within three weeks or so after court. Well take cares. See ya next week.

-Lil' Eric U4

From The Beat: We're a little unsure of what actually happened, Eric, but we really find it hard to believe that running was the best course of action, even if the outcome is turning out all right for you (and we're glad it is). What are the other possible consequences that might have come from running? Did you consider all of them before you took this action, and not only consider them, but be prepared to accept them? If this had landed you behind walls for more time, would it have been the right thing? You're happy because you're getting what you wanted in the first place, but if you were not so happy (because you had to pay a heavier price than you bargained for) and you looked back, where do you think you could have moved things in a different direction before it got to that point?

Beat Office Western Addition

Yeah, it's ya boy Young Chris. Yeah, I'm 'bout to be 17 in one month, and I've been coming here to this shhh for three years. I know y'all got homies on the block that be telling y'all to go to school and don't be on no hot shhhh. Yeah, I had some homies like that. They name was John John and Booski, but they gone.

And now me, I'm out all night ready to knock somethin'. Ninjas done changed ma name to Baby Spillz from Young Chris, but yeah, life in the 'hood ain't no joke.

RIP Weezy John Booski.

-Young Chris U4

From The Beat: No one's life — wherever they are living it — is a joke. Life is all that we have, a gift from our Creator. By treating it with such disrespect (yours as well as others), you're spitting in The Creator's face. Be careful. He spits back!

We Not Living King's Dream

I feel like they don't want to see young black men step it up in life. All they want is to lock us up in these new weak ass-halls. It seems to me like every city is getting a new hall. Why they couldn't build a new school or start a collage program for kids with good grades or build a new youth center or buy new supplies for schools? Or they could have built a shelter.

All they want to do is lock all blacks and Latinos up in these new halls. You don't see no white kids locked up with us. No you don't. If you do, they 'bout to get out in about two or three days. King ask for us to have freedom but we are not living his dream.

-Scari U6

From The Beat: MLK asked for every person to be judged by his or her character, and not by skin color. Do you judge white people by their character or their skin color? He was speaking to everyone, so his dream applies equally to black and white, and brown and yellow. Can we ask you a question: When you were free, did you take advantage of the school that was there for you? Did you prepare yourself for the college that is there for you? Did you hang out in the youth centers that exist in this city? We're not saying that racism is over, because it isn't. But we're saying you have to take responsibility for your own actions, whatever your color, and if you didn't take advantage of school when it was there for you, why should "they" build a new one?

How I Want To Be Judged

What up with The Beat? This your boy DB. The way I would like people to judge me by getting my money and look out for the young homies. And how I took care of my mom. When I get out I going to be with my little bra, Wink,

¬Db U6

From The Beat: How are you taking care of your mom if you're in this place? Do you plan to be able to remain with your little brother when you get out, because he will follow what you do (and not what you say), so just remember what it means to be a role model.

To Remember Me

I want to be remembered by the way I am, a person that does not play well with others, whose idol was Stanley "Tookie" Williams, and is proud of it.

To remember me, you would have to know who I am and what I did when I was living. The importance of this is there would never be a person like me.

I want to be remembered by the way I would knock people out cold for no reason at all. It may seem the same way that everybody has done it, but my case is different. Some people died for no reason at al, but I have never been caught for nothing like that at all. It's ironic that I get caught for petty shhh, other than the real bad shhh that I do to other people. Most people robbed other than their race, but me, I would rob anyone and anything in my path. I need to be king instead of a peasant, what I was called as a youngsta.

-Nick Beam U6

From The Beat: We're sorry you were called a peasant when you were young, even though there's really nothing wrong with being a peasant. It only means someone who is poor, and who lives off the land. There's no shame in that. But we will call you a hypocrite for pretending to admire Stanley Williams while disrespecting what he stood for. Did you know that Stanley hated being called "Tookie" and whenever he was interviewed from death row, he always insisted that they call him Stanley or Mr. Williams, and never Tookie. That is because Tookie was his gang name, and he rejected all that he had done as a gangster. To honor him for what he hated about himself is not to honor him at all, but to spit in his face. It is because WE are proud to hold Stanley Williams in high regard and to admire all he accomplished from his lonely prison cell that we cannot allow you to misrepresent what he stood for, and to claim him as an idol without understanding what he stood for and who he was. If he could read what you've written, he would be very, very sad.

When I Get Out Of Here

When I get out of here, am going to forget about the past and do what I got to do to stay out of here, get a job and go to school, and do what I have to do to see my family again.

-Jb Money U5

From The Beat: Although we appreciate the goals you have set for yourself, and believe that if you pursue them, you'll put yourself on a road to success and a better life, we are not encouraged by the fact that you had an hour to write, but could only give us one sentence! Getting a job and going to school are great goals, but each requires effort and perseverance. This piece shows us neither.

A Waste If Time

Jail is a waste of time because when you locked up you can't do what you wanna do. You got counselors trying to talk you al crazy, like they own you. Then the next thing you know, you got time in yo' cell for talking crazy back to them.

You can't earn no money in jail, and you can't be with yo' female. You can't hang on da block, but you can be locked in yo' room all day and yell out.

-S

From The Beat: Jail is only a waste of time for those who don't use their time, and that's also true for freedom. By reading this, it seems like time is just a waste for you altogether. Here you are complaining about being locked up and hating exactly what jail is, but talking about going back to the same things that led you here in the first place. So, we don't think you hate it here nearly as much as you pretend. If you did, instead of wasting your time condemning the place, you'd be using your time to look inside yourself to see what you need to change to keep yourself out of here. If you get out of here and do the same as before, you'll soon be back claiming again that you're wasting your time. And, you'll be right...

If I Was To Go

If I was to go, I would want all my friends and family to remember me as a good person. I wouldn't want them to cry over me or have a funeral. I want a going away party with all my old beezy there, feel me. You know how I do it, ha ha, feel me.

-Scari U6

From The Beat: Not a whole lot here, SB. We hope you'll be remembered as you want to be, but whatever you want, you'll be remembered for the way you lived, not the way you wished you lived.

Forgetful

I'm always forgetful with names. I have short-term memory loss. I forget things that happens in a few days. I don't have a good memory till later on in life. I call people out their names.

-Jason U6

From The Beat: Has your bad memory ever put you in difficult or embarrassing situations? If you're smoking weed, you're making your short-term memory go bad. Don't forget.

Staff

Well, what I want to write about today is dat forget da staff that play us out of our rec time and have us hella hungry 'cause dey eat all of our food when dey can buy their own and eat as much as dey want to!

-Angel U6

From The Beat: We just thought of a wonderful solution to your problem: Stay out of juvenile hall! (From now on, if you do not have your name on what you write, we will not put it in The Beat.)

When It's Time To Go

What it do Beat? Just chillin' like I'm doin' every day. This topic caught my attention because this a real topic to really think about.

It's a few things that I want people to know. First off I want all the females to know I got swipe, if you didn't already know ya heard. Next I want all the thugs to know that I was a real ninja, stayed loyal to the homies. And it's a few positive things I was loyal to as well, such as my family, my education, my homies and thugs. But never could be loyal to a female. Ask me why... 'cause I'm A.F.B. (Al-Freakin-Bundy), that's why bra bra.

But shhh, I really don't care about what they think about me. It's about what they already know 'bout me. But if you know us, we go stay shinin' non-stop.

-Al-bundy U7

From The Beat: It's hard to stay shinin' when you're behind thick walls and locked doors. You've got the brains and the drive to shine, AFB, but as long as you need to impress your homies more than to live up to your own goals, you'll never shine as bright as your potential. People will know you in life as in death by what you do while you're here, and not what you say you're gonna do. Time to start doing, for real.

The Homies

The homies on the block tell me to stay in school and don't be out here trying to bang and slang 'cause it is always a consequence to hanging and banging, and it's either death or jail. But from my head, I still try to bang and hang.

The big homies on the block tell me you too young to be out here. I just say, "Shut up! You not ma dad." The other homies tell me, "Let's go do something," I say, "Let's go," and we go do our thang and come back and smoke a little bit of weed.

But now I realize that hanging and banging not that fun, 'cause when you either dead or in jail, yo' homies just smoke a blunt for you or try to do something. Now, since my homies died, I'm out here, I say, "Forget school." Now I don't have no homies to tell me to stay in school so I just do me.

Now I'm in YGC saying to maself , "Screw the world," and praying for all ma homies to survive in these streets. When I get out, I'm gone be out there like I was but not as hard. Holla at you later.

-Lil' Kada U4

From The Beat: You may be saying "Screw the world," but anyone with any sense can see that you're only screwing yourself! Even if your homies were there to tell you to go to school, you've already told us that you wouldn't do it because they aren't your dad. (And, we also know that even if your dad told you to go to school, you wouldn't do it because you think you already know everything you need to know...) Since you're still thinking like a child (or not thinking at all), there are other consequences besides death or jail we'd like you to consider. For example, do you know anyone who lives his life in a wheelchair, and depends on others to feed him, clean him, etc? Can you imagine being that person, needing someone to take you to the shower to wash you, take you to the toilet and wipe your behind for you? That's another possible consequence, and we can promise you that not one of those poor souls confined to their chairs ever gave it a thought... before it happened. We hope you grow up before something like this, or worse, happens to you. (From now on, if you don't include your name on your piece, we won't be able to publish it in The Beat.)

When It's My Time To Go

When it's ma time to go and live that second life to live, I want people to know what type of person I am. Only my true ninjas and friends really know me.

But for the people that's reading da Beat, I'm not that type of person that goes out on the street lookin' for trouble. Most of the time trouble usually finds me. But when trouble finds me, I'm not the type of person to run and hide under a tree.

I can handle my shhh the way it comes. Like the sayin' goes, when life throws you a curveball, you just got to concentrate an' hit a homer.

-Young Meel U7

From The Beat: Is being locked up in juvenile hall an example of hitting a homer? How many "homers" like this one will it take before you strike out? Whether you're looking for trouble or just finding it, the results seem to be the same, so if you change nothing about how you're living, what do you expect is going to happen? And if you change something about the way you're living, what will it be?

Missing My Baby

I just feel so down because I miss my lil' baby. Not my B.M. hell no. I don't miss B.M. She hella fine but she left when I got caught. I talked to her last week and she said that if I don't change my lifestyle she won't let me see my Morrito. Well I think its time to get my shhh together and be cool, you dig?

-Young Tweety U7

From The Beat: You're only talking about what you are missing, Tweety, without really thinking about what those you've allowed to be left behind are missing. We understand why you feel the pain you do, but our heart goes out more to that baby you've left without a father, than to you who made the choices that left him (temporarily) fatherless. Start thinking of things from his point of view, and maybe you'll find it easier to get your act together. You contributed to bringing him into the world. What are you planning to contribute now that he's here?

That Girl

I thought I liked her, but really I don't even know her. I like her smile, but when I talk to her she smile and look away. I see her when I'm going to class, I'm in special-ed and she is too. My mom always said that I should get a girl that could read better than me. I really hope she could but to keep it real, that's the only girl that I ever thought about reading in front of, and I knew she wouldn't laugh at me. I think she would try to help me.

But as I found out about her she looked different to me — not ugly never, but she was just a girl I liked but couldn't be the wife. Sorry.

-Dm U4

From The Beat: What did you find out about her that made you change your feelings? Until you wrote that last sentence, she sounded like the perfect partner for you, someone who would help you and not laugh at you when you read. Did she say or do something that changed all that, or are you listening to gossip? Maybe it's not time to be thinking of a "wife" but of a friend. Could she be that?

Taking Things For Granted

What Neil take for grated is my future in my life. I was livin' and I take it for granted. My big "unk" is sorry for my because I'm in jail and I can be home. That's what unk take for granted too. I take holidays for granted because I'm supposed to be there, and I'm not.

-Neily U4

From The Beat: If you've learned that by taking these things for granted, you have slowed down your progress in life, then maybe coming here was something you needed. (But school is what you really need, so don't forget...)

Who Is "Worthy"

What's up wit' The Beat? This that vato Cartoon in the Beat. Y'all ask me a question about what's my definition of those worthy.

Well when I say those worthy, in my eyes that's somebody who puts it down for what he/she believes in, no matter how big or small they is, regardless wherever they are. If a punk disrespect he gets off on fool and whoops his butt, at minimum represents till the day he dies always, rides till the wheels fall off. Yadda I mean.

-Cartoon U7

From The Beat: We're not even sure you know what you mean. Let's put it to you this way, Cartoon. If you are down for your set (and whatever beliefs you think it stands for), and your "enemies" are also down for their set (and whatever beliefs they think it stands for), are both you and your enemies "worthy"? And if you are both worthy, then how can you justify violence against them? And if you are not both worthy, then how can you defend your definition. If you're thinking at all, it's still the thinking of a little boy, which is too bad, because you've got the brainpower to start thinking like a responsible man. We're waiting... (This is the last time we will print any piece from this institution that does not include the writer's name. Your choice...)

Back At The Ranch

Man, this Lg. You know they got me back at the boring Ranch. I can't wait until I touch back down. I'm gonna have a monster jam with the homies.

-Lg LCRS

From The Beat: Why are you at the Ranch a second time? What didn't you learn the first time?

I'll Never Forget

One thing I will not forget was when my ninja Black got shot right in front of me, and took the bullets that were probably supposed to hit me. He survived, but it was crazy when it happened because he told me to watch out for the dudes right across, and then right when I looked, they started shooting.

-Yung Jokes U6

From The Beat: Yes, it would be impossible for us to forget something like that, too. Why do you think those bullets were meant for you? What are you doing that people want to shoot you? When Black took those shots — and could have lost his life — did it make you think about anything in a different way? Or did you just go back doing the same things that led to the beef in the first place? What would it take for you to see that your life (and his life, and the life of the dudes who shot) are all worth something. What will it take to make you respect what your Creator has created?

I Was The One And Only Me

I want people to know that I was me before I go. I want people to know that I was the one and only me and there will never be someone like me ever again. The most important thing of all that I want people to know is that I will always be there for the people I love — maybe not in physical form, but always in my loved ones' hearts.

-Jacky U3

From The Beat: We have many loved ones in our hearts, Jacky, but what we miss is them in our lives! You are very much alive right now, so your goal should be to always be there in the lives of those who love you, and we're talking about being there in a physical form. You! Your body! Your tears! Your laughter! Your help! They need you, not your words of love. Find a way to stay with those you love when you get back to them, so that in addition to being in their hearts, you will also be in their lives!

A Good Person, And A "Good" Criminal

I want people to know that I was a good person, a grand theft auto specialist, and a ride or die ninja, wit' a ride or die female. Sometimes I make people laugh, smile and sometimes even cry. But most times people enjoy being around me and especially, my female! Also my family, so really all I want people to think of me when I'm gone is basically... you figure it out by yourself!

-Cordero U4

From The Beat: We can see how "expert" you are at your criminal craft, as you sit here wearing some other dude's drawers, answering to strangers for your every move, eating what "they" serve and not what you want, showering with other boys, etc. If your female and family love being around you because you're such a great guy, then why did you forget about them (at the very least) by allowing yourself to be taken away? Other things must be more important to you than they are. Do you think they're laughing now? Are you? We hope you grow up in time to see that you will be remembered for what you do, and not the jokes you told. But everyone matures at their own pace. We just wish you'd speed the process up a little, because if you don't, you're bound to make that one mistake which all the regrets in the world can never change...

My Role Model

My brother is my role model, because he took me in when I ain't got nowhere to stay. He gives me a lot of stuff — money, clothes, my own room, all that. That's why I look up to him.

-Lil' Kut U5

From The Beat: Do you look up to your brother enough to stay out of places like this? You owe him a lot, but we're not talking about the money, clothes and room that he has given you. We're talking about you, yourself. He doesn't want to see you taken from him and locked up, but that is not within his power, it is only within yours.

What They Want To Know

What people want to know about the Thug. I get money and smoke big purple. I'ma go be a thug forever. I got shot three times when I was out on the house.

-Fat T U7

From The Beat: All we can say, Fat Thug, is that if you are committed to thugging "forever," as you write, then forever will not be very long... What's even worse is that it appears you're going to have to learn this lesson the hard way.

Tired Of Playing With My Freedom

Man, what's up, Beat? Man, I'm still up in here. I'm just tryin' to get up out of here. I am tryin' to go home and if I don't, oh well. Naw, but I'm just trying to get up out of here. I'm tired of actually playing with my freedom.

But, yeah, man, I think that I can do what I gotta do, because I have some people that have my back all the way. So I have a lot of support on my side. I know I can stay out of trouble, but for me, it's about wanting to stay out of trouble. I want to, but it be hard, because sometimes I don't be sure about what to do, because sometimes I be wanting to go back to what I'm doing, but sometimes I don't.

Now I start thinking about what I could've done to stay out of here. I want to thank The Beat for coming over here and supporting us. I also want to thank Omega, my mom, and my uncle. I'll holla at you next week if I'm still here.

-Young Drew U5

From The Beat: We appreciate the honesty of this piece, and we are grateful for your thanks to The Beat, plus we're sure Omega, your mom and your uncle feel just the same way. But the true thanks comes through your actions, not through your words. You have to decide what you want for yourself, Drew, as hard as that might be. If you choose to keep doing what you've been doing, then you're also choosing to hand away your freedom; you're choosing to allow strangers to take you from the arms of your mom and your uncle and put you in a box. If, on the other hand, you make the decision to thank all of us by changing your actions, then you're also choosing to put yourself on a path towards a better life. The harder thing to do, the one requiring more courage, is to leave your old ways behind you. You might not be up to that task. But in the long run, it will make everything in your life much easier. We can only hope you have the courage for it. If you have a lot of support on your side and you don't take advantage of it, you'll find yourself back in the box.

All About That Chedda

Yeah, it's yo' boy. You know what I'm 'bout, all about that money. I stay on my hustle from dusk 'till dawn. Even when I'm locked down I'm on top of how I'm gonna make that next dolla. When I was free I was the dolla. I mean money ain't everything, but hey, it's good to have. That's it I'm out.

-Young Number U2

From The Beat: You're already making "the next dolla" — except you're making it for all the counselors, all the staff, all the jailers, all the cops, all the people that process you (like a dollar bill through a change machine). We're sure they're very grateful for putting money in their pockets... You say that money isn't everything, but it's all you talk about here. So, what else is there? We guess family isn't too important to you ('cause you've given the system all the power it needs to take you away from them). We're guessing your own freedom isn't very important to you since you've handed it away and promise to do it again. (Oh yes, that's what this piece tells anyone with experience...) So what, besides money, do you value? If you call being locked up with a bunch of boys and answering to a bunch of strangers for your every move "on top," we wonder what "on bottom" means...

Who I Am And Who I Was

Man, if I was to go tonight or to tomorrow, I would want da homies and my family and wifey to let ninjas know who I was and what I did, just like we did for da big homes from da block.

Da big homes Monte and Big Ant got hit wit' a chop, and we let dem ninjas who didn't know dem, we let dem ninjas know who dey was and let dem know what it is. Like I said, I want da homey and family and my wifey to let ninjas know who I was.

-Young Mijic U4

From The Beat: Do you think telling the little homies about the big homies that got killed helped to dry their mothers' tears? Do you think — if you allow yourself to be taken from her — that your mother will stop her crying, whatever anyone tells her? Of course not. Instead, she would cry, "My baby is gone, before he had a chance to be a man." And we see that you are not yet a man, so why follow some other kid who also left his mother in tears? You say you want them to say who you were, but you don't tell us who you are. Do you know who you are? You will be judged — in life as in death — by the things you do, and not the things you say. So, what do you do? And what do you want to do? (From now on, if you don't include your name on your piece, we won't be able to publish it in The Beat.)

My Grandpa Is My Role Model

My grandpa is my role model, 'cause everything I want, he's got already. I look up to him. He's a good dad, grandpa, brother, and everything. He's in a record company and he's a retired Marine. He was in the Marines and he's my inspiration, and I love him.

-Lil' D U5

From The Beat: He sounds like a wonderful man, Lil' D. When you say he's your inspiration, what do you mean? What does he inspire you to want to do? How will you do it?

I'm Just Tryna Get Through LIfe

Yeah, what's up with The Beat? I know last week was phony, but I'm back, ya dig?

I was just thinking about ma life. I'm about to get out and I don't have any goals, but I'm gone try my best to get through life and do some of things I never got to do in my life, ya dig?

-B. Wizz U3

From The Beat: No, we don't dig. How can you say you have no goals while also trying to do things you never got to do before? Isn't that what goals are? What are some of those things you want to do. And besides wanting them, how do you plan to get them?

When I Touch Six Feet Under

What good with that Beat thang? This ya boy, Twon, coming from that U3 status. Well, I'm 'bout to put you up on what I want people to think of me when I touch six feet under. I want people to think of me in a positive way, that do thangs for my community.

-Twon U3

From The Beat: If you act in a positive way and do things for your community, that is exactly how you will be thought of. Your deeds will determine how people think of you.

WALDEN HOUSE PSK

I Want To Travel The World

A legacy that I want to leave behind is that I traveled all over the world. Some specific places are Japan, Ireland, Italy, Europe... Everywhere!

I want people to remember me as someone who absorbed information and was very intelligent. P.S. I will go to Japan.

-Angel

From The Beat: We think travel outside the country is something everyone should do, because it gives you an entirely different view of the world, and makes you realize that everyone thinks her spot, her city, her country is the center of things. We admire you for your desire to travel. We've been to a number of the places you want to go (including Japan), and we've never regretted a minute of it! Go for it!

A Day To Observe

Animal Day... We need a kill them all off.

-Crack Head

From The Beat: How 'bout we start with the animal called homo-sapien? Oops, that animal is already doing a bang-up job on its own. (We repeat: STOP BEING LAZY! From now on, we won't print any of your one-sentence pieces. You're waiting your time and ours, and there's no need for it. We put out a lot of effort to give you this opportunity. Stop disrespecting The Beat, because that's exactly what you're doing.)

All The Unsolved Mysteries In My Life

When it's my time to go, I want to know who robbed me, who killed so and so...w'ateva happen to ol' girl an' why someone did this... Yeah.

-Crack Head

From The Beat: Oh, so boring... Yeah.

Forgetfulness Is Laziness

I think forgetfulness is laziness. When your not on top of yo' shhh, you laggin' on things. Someone should always be on top of what goes on. As far as memory goes, it's always good to keep them in mind, for what would we be without past experiences?

-Crack Head

From The Beat: Do you ever find it hard to remember things you want to remember, or forget things you want to forget? Although you're not going to like this, Crack Head, we've told you before that we want you to select one topic to write a lot about instead of three topics to write just a line or two about. We consider it lazy not to write at least three-fourths of a page. And you can do much more than that. It's a matter of choice.

Sad But Funny

One thing I will never forget is when I was nine years old. My mom was visiting me at my dad's house and we decided to go swimming in the Sacramento River. She was drunk and jumped off the bridge. It was so scary for me. There was tree fragments underwater all over, but luckily she landed in a clear spot. Still, unfortunately, she landed flat on her ass. For the next couple of weeks she was black and blue from her mid-back down to her calves. It was sad but funny.

-No Name

From The Beat: Unfortunately, this scary memory (your mom could easily have lost her life) wasn't enough to make you see where addiction can lead. We think that's because children follow the example of their parents, and when that example is alcoholism, there's a powerful chance that the children (especially the girl children) will follow. We don't know if alcohol has been your drug of choice or not, but we do know that this memory is not as funny as you think, even if y'all laughed about it at the time. Now the time has come to learn the lessons it teaches.

Still Doing Time

Everywhere I go, it seems I'm still doing time. I'm stressed out and not happy. If I'm not happy where I am, I might as well be in jail. When I'm in jail, I'm feeling all the same feelings that I am now. Why doesn't the BS ever change? Why can't my life be better?

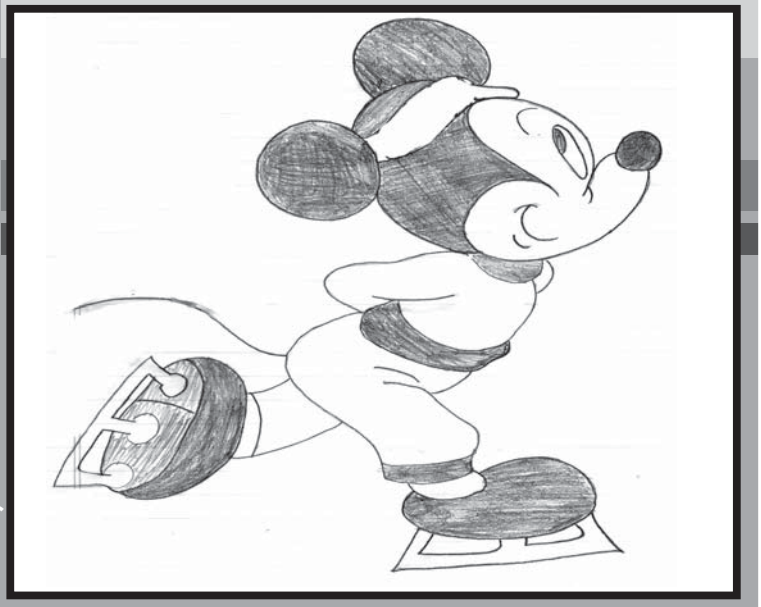
For my cousin sitting in jail and my dad in prison, keep your heads up, because some things never change.

-Speedy

From The Beat: But some things do change, Speedy, and one of those things that's important to change is your thinking. The reason this is different from jail is that you are being given tools you didn't have before to help you rethink things you thought you knew and understood, but will learn (if you choose) that you only partly understood. We hope you take advantage of what's offered here, so that you don't end up like your cousin and dad, receiving "heads up" messages from those on the outside to you on the inside.

For the next couple of weeks she was black and blue from her mid-back down to her calves.

From The Beat: We wish we could have "Throwbacks" in The Beat Within every week, but that's not the case. Every now and then we will rerun pieces from past issues that span our twelve year career. This week we want to showcase for you readers the POW (Pieces Of the Week) and the responses from The Beat from one year ago, issue 11.06. Enjoy!



In My Life, Hope to Be Good Soon

Part One: My life is good to me, because I learn more and more everyday. I'm still a young man, but I think my life is messed-up because I'm in jail. I believe I can change my life around though, because I got a lot to learn while I'm still young. Feel me? I can use this time to put my life on hold, so I can see what I want to be when I get released.

Part Two: In my life, mainly I was raised by the streets, but my momma was always there. I just never listened to what she was telling me, and that's why I am in something like this place now. But when I get out, I know what to do. Now I know how to restrain myself from my old ways out there on the streets, 'cause out there on the streets, they'll get you killed. I ain't trying to end up six feet under.

Part Three: I was selling drugs 'cause that's fast money, and I love fast money! So I just decided, "I'm gettin' it!" It would always feel like, "Nobody can stop me!" I mean, you know, the women would be on me! And I loved it when I would get all the attention. But that's enough of that — back to me today and who I want to be tomorrow.

Part Four: When I get out of here, I got stuff lined up. There are jobs out there, like construction and working with the youth. But my main focus will be to finish high school, go to college and play football — that's my favorite sport! When you get to the end of selling drugs, it's a dead end for you folks. You always end up in somebody's jail, 'cause that's how the game goes.

Part Five: Man, I miss my patna. He was like a brother to me. He use to let me do things he'd do. He used to be a role model to me — but the day he got killed, is the day I lost him. Man, my patna! That's the day I didn't care about nothin' or nobody, not even myself. If we'd have gone to the movies, he would never have been dead! I still think about you day and night. He'll always be in my heart. And I still watch over your little sister. The good days.

-Rayshawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for stepping up with all this wisdom as well as love straight from the heart. So many of our readers have lost a best friend or brother or loved one to killers in the street! And nearly every one, it seems respond just as you did — a desperate don't-care-about-nothin' attitude possesses you heart and soul. It's so important that you share experiences like this, and still tell people how important it is to change your life on the outs. Really, that's what the lesson is in all these killings — every one of us has a choice to be part of the problem or part of the solution. Those who stay in the street seeking revenge, and that in the name of love, are part of the problem — gunplay, killing, so-called "holding it down" is the problem. Or be part of the solution: show young and old alike that it's possible to change your life. Get an education, a job and raise a family right. Props!

Drowning In a Puddle of Tears

drowning in a puddle of tears
mesmerized by the days
and choking on the years
like driving with no steering wheel
like a gunshot wound that won't heal
like a lost man with nothing
so feelings he can't feel
like "rest in ..." but without the "peace"
like trying to open a lost treasure chest
without the key
can you see falling tears so high
like when jesus parted the sea
and tears of regret and dishonor
like adam and eve eating the fruit from the tree
drowning in a puddle of tears
mesmerized by the days
and choking on the years
like a family without a mother
or a younger sibling without a big brother
so much frustration and pain
like fallen tears falling like rain
like cupid with no aim
so much anger in a sane person
like sticking your hand in the fire
but not burning
drowning in a puddle of tears
mesmerized by the days
and choking on the years
like prison cells with no steel
struggles of discrimination
like martin luther king or tookie will'
like a mockingbird that don't sing
like a whole empire
but without a faithful king
like "i love ..." but without the "you"
like trust but without the truth
where would life be without "i" or "him" or "you"
drowning in a puddle of tears
mesmerized by the days
and choking on the years
like doing the crime but without doing the time
like a rose-colored diamond that don't shine
like life without air
like prisons without gas chambers or electric chairs
so you tell me — who cares
drowning in a puddle of tears
mesmerized by the days
and choking on the years

-Lil' Jamar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Have you grown into the calling of a poet, or what? You give voice to the despair of so many facing time beyond their imagination of endurance, for some more time served than time lived here on earth! But when you ask, "Who cares?" — you know there were voices before this point, who tried to show they cared by warnings and tears, even threats born of fears. The mothers care, the younger brothers and sisters who wish their incarcerated siblings were there. The one who acted most like he didn't care, is the one who finds himself locked up in here. You can almost hear him (really so many of them) say, "I don't care! I don't give a what!" It sounds so bold; maybe that's what intoxicates his soul, so he's too drunk to see how he will feel when the tomorrow he curses becomes today's reality. Did you read Lil' Eddie's pieces written the same week as these but that we printed in issue 11.04? Choosing to go back to the life that sent him here sixteen times! And what about you? We feel the pain, we hear it crystal clear in your every poetical refrain — but are you willing to make a change on the outs? It takes courage and strength, to make change come about — and caring about yourself, not just ghetto-fabulous displays of easy-come easy-go wealth. Who cares? It needs to be you.

my main focus will be to finish high school, go to college and play football — that's my favorite sport!

If my father were still alive today, I like to believe I wouldn't be here, but I'm not always right. All I am sure of is that I loved him very much and I wish I could get him back

The Cost Of ...

how could one person go through
so much frustration and pain
tell me what it takes
or the cost of being sane
like light without fuses
like a boxing match with no bruises
like a man who reaches out but has no arms
like a leprechaun without his lucky charms
like an angel without wings or a halo
like a judge being a judge but with no say-so
like a hollow-tip but without the gun
like a beautiful sunny day but without the sun
how could one person go through
so much frustration and pain
tell me what it takes
or the cost of being sane
like a man with no eyes to see
and like somebody telling him
come here and follow me
like walking with no feet
like tryin'a move forward but
getting pulled down like you stuck in concrete
like a train with no tracks
like instead of saying "welcome"
it say "go away" on your doormat
how could one person go through
so much frustration and pain
tell me what it takes
or the cost of being sane
like a working man's slacks without creases
people say this is life
but there's still missing pieces
like a bird without wings to fly
like a baby without eyes to cry
like boys with girls
like life without the world
can't you see
it's like life without the lord
am i getting through to you
or you haven't heard a word
how could one person go through
so much frustration and pain
tell me what it takes
or the cost of being sane
can you see
it's like red stripes on a bumblebee
or green stripes on a zebra
or people growing on trees
like "thanks" but without the "giving"
like being alive but without the living
like adam without the eve
or a sweater with no sleeves

-Lil' Jamar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Again, you've got this style down, and we love your sound even if it hurts to feel what you're saying. One line that jumps out at us, not because it's the best poetically speaking, but because it feels like it addresses what we're seeking when we write back to you — is the one about being blind and someone says, "Follow me." It seems like the street has blinded your mind and heart so completely, that when we point toward the light, you just see into darkness deeply, feeling it's not possible for you to change — the game is all you've ever known, and you can't imagine outgrowing it. That paradox is what we read in all the paradoxical images you just conceived. If only we could find a way to help you believe — you could stay free after your released! Find a new game and quit the old pain.

Dear Mama

Dear Mama, it's hard to perceive
Why in God's name you would just up and leave
You said that I needed a dad to take me through
Well, you know what, mom? I needed you, too
I used to cry at night, screaming your name
From the time I was two, 'til just past ten
I didn't hear one word; imagine how I felt then
Today is your birthday, and don't ask me why
But I took the time out to give your phone a try
My birthday was November; haven't seen you since 9/27
I have a feeling I won't 'til Christ comes from heaven
I left you a message; I said "I love you"
I don't, but you lied to me, so I'll lie to you, too

-Scorpion, Marin

From The Beat: This is one of the most heart-breaking poems you've ever written. Having parents who don't want you must just make your own pain even more anguishing. Yet you have, on many levels, so much innate joy and hopefulness. You seem to thrive on entertaining and amusing other people. We hope you can find a family—adults, teens, whomever, whom you can live with, lean on, when you get out again, that will support you in succeeding.

Higher Learning

My purpose in life is to get an education - finish high school, attend college, obtain my degree, first my Bachelors then my Ph.D.

Finding the purpose of my life took a few years to realize but being in juvenile hall for a couple of weeks helped me see the way. My purpose is also related to my ambitions and goals in life.

My main goal is to get married, have a daughter and raise her to be hard working and independent just like my parents.

When I was younger, I didn't really plan out what I wanted to do but being in jail made me realize that while we're here our lives pass us by, day by day. This fact ate me alive, mentally and emotionally. While being in here, I have had all the time to think, I thought about what my purpose should be and how much I should've been focusing on it.

-Ron, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes we get what we need in the strangest of places. Although losing time being in the halls may not be a dream come true, it sounds like it has really taught you something that could change the rest of your life. Mistakes only become big when we don't learn something from them. So while you may have lost some time now it was all for a good cause – your future.

Memories of My Father

One person I will never get back is my father. He was the most important person in my life. When I think of him now, I am ashamed of myself for getting in this situation.

My father was sick for as long as I can remember. One of the earliest memories I have of him was my mother sneaking my brother and me into my father's hospital room. That happened when I was three.

Throughout my life I looked up to him more as an older brother than a father. He was always there for me, because his sickness made it nearly impossible (for him) to find a job.

What I remember of him mostly was that he was the funniest person I know. No matter what he always had something to say. Most of the time I found it hilarious unless his attention was directed towards me then my ego would step in, but my father and I never had any serious altercations.

If my father were still alive today, I like to believe I wouldn't be here, but I'm not always right. All I am sure of is that I loved him very much and I wish I could get him back.

-Shotgun, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The bond between you and your father seems very strong, especially now that we have your longer story about how he first got sick (which we will publish in the next issue). We know he's gone – but what qualities live on in you – we've seen two so far for sure, a sense of humor and an ability to stay strong under stress. These are your father's legacy, but now they belong to you.

Me

I haven't killed anybody, haven't sold crack to moms
Haven't robbed a store and I've never been armed
Never stole a car or run from the cops
Never held a gun, let alone popped off a shot
I've never popped that thizz or took a ride on the dragon
Never dropped acid, never smoked on that ice wagon
Don't mess with crack, never burned my lip
Never fiended so bad I'd...
I don't light things on fire; I don't beg for change
Never had nobody made my manhood a game
I don't hit on girls; never threw a punch in my life
While others dream of money, I dream of a wife
I try my best not to lie; I'm not an asshole
I eat, sleep and shhh and I do what I'm told
I'm a human being with likes and dislikes
I've got normal emotions; I'm not always nice
I've cut myself and I still have urges to cry
But the tears won't fall, no matter what I try
I've smoked the purp and I've chomped them 'shrooms
I've popped open a bottle; I finished it in my room
I'm not a virgin, but I've only slept with two girls
I'm sensitive; I know the words to "A Whole New World"
I write poetry and read romance novels by the box
On my parents' wedding I had the chicken pox
My parents hate me and I don't like them
I love watching my thoughts come out of a pen
I'm sure of my sexuality, don't think I'm not
And for that reason I think Johnny Depp is hot
I'm not gay in that way, but my life is happy
Today is good, but my life's been crappy
Most of you don't care, but some of you do
And I hope that you'll pray for me, like I do you
I'm single and happy; I just want a true friend
And if you're that person, I want to be with you 'til the end

-Scorpion, Marin

From The Beat: From what we know and have read you seem to be a pretty good guy, not to mention that sometimes you write like a genius, other times like an amazing comedian, then like a portrait artist who depicts hell. How do you envision your future? What do you want it to be like? Do you want to go to college? Is anybody helping you develop a solid future? First you must establish a home for yourself, so you can build your life from there. Are there programs available to you that offer a home for teens your age, to give you some stability, until you can establish a solid life for yourself?

Change

Change is a big part of everyone's life. Me, myself, I know from experience. Over the past fifteen years of my life, I've been through a lot of change, some of it for the better, some for the worse.

I used to swear at my mom, but thank God, I've been able to change that. Now that I'm older, I look back and I realize how stupid I looked. I can see how much pain I was causing my mother and the rest of my family. My mom raised six kids on her own with no help from anyone — so, in my eyes, she deserves the utmost respect. I love my mom and the rest of my family to death! Without them, I'm nothing.

I've also changed relationship-wise, too. I used to call myself a player. I never thought I'd fall in love with any female, but all that changed on July seventeenth of last year. I met the girl of my dreams. At first, I admit, I didn't have good intentions, not back when we first got together, though I don't really know why. That's just how it was. It took me a long time to get to — if you know what I mean — and in the process, she got to me in a more emotional way. And ever since then, we've been the perfect couple.

If I can change, anyone can change! It's a lot of hard work and practice, but you can do it. The first step is to realize what you are doing wrong and come at the problem in a different way. and, with that said, change is a guarantee!

-Devanae, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Seldom have we seen a piece that comes at the problem of change so honestly, simply and directly. Your recounting of the change you made vis-à-vis your mother, makes us wonder just how many of our readers might usefully start making their changes right there. What could be clearer than the woman who gave you birth and worked all her life to support and raise you, deserves your love and respect? Relationships are another close-to-home and close-to-heart place to work on change. Are we likely to be more compassionate with strangers, not to mention cross-town rivals, when we disrespect, to use your two examples, the women to whom we most should be giving love and respect? Thank you, Devanae.

A Quill In Each Hand

She say:
"This is the sweet sweet smell
Of urban decay
And this is where I lay
My head to rest
With all the other restless rejects
And I have no regrets
Because this is the best rest
I've ever caressed
Since the first phase of my genesis
When I was being hatched out an egg
With two legs
And a nametag that says
'Genocide lives
And injustice is
Because Jim Crow still exists'
And this is why I began
With a quill in each hand
So I can spit my list of demands
Like Moses
On a hill made of sand
And maybe my lips
Are ill-equipped
But the only thing that's sick
Is the way you all ignore
The destruction at your fingertips
And maybe I'm just on the wrong side
Of politics
But when you say
'All the world is a stage'
I'm not one of the actors
Being paid
To play charades
I'm a renegade
And I like flipping the script
On your epoch of genocidal intent
And I refuse to pay rent
To a society I did not help invent
Because most of the time
I think you all forget
This is not a country
Founded on innocence
And this might make me
Six-pence none the richer
But at least at the end of the day
I'm not the one
Locking my brothers away
Putting babies behind bars
For stealing cars
They only hoped would take them far away
From the injustice they face each day
Because how would you feel
If you were never given the chance
To dance
To the beat of someone else's drum?
Because when 'Thy will be done'
It wouldn't be a lot of fun
And maybe you would be the one
To reach for the gun
And shoot down the sun
So that someone would understand
The meaning of darkness

-Ungslbah, LCRS SF/YGC

From The Beat: Congratulations on a writing brilliant poem, Ungslbah! We are so honored that you participated as our guest, from the Navajo, Santa Fe Indian School, in our LCRS writing program. Injustice does rain down throughout the land, but there are many ways of moving across this earth without stealing someone else's car to do it. It's terrific to teach youth that they have the right to more than they were born with, but what about encouraging them to earn whatever they need? What's wrong with work? If you encourage them to steal what others have to get what they want or think they need, that can set them in a direction that can end in disaster. What if you teach them the beauty of dancing to the music of their own drum, as well as others? When someone feels the depths of darkness, should he or she shoot down the sun so everyone feels only cold? Thank you Writers' Corp for joining us and bringing your guest to participate in our program.

My Boy

My boy died for looking like someone else. When he died I lost it because we grew up together. I thought we would be together forever but when he was shot I lost a lot.

Thinking of him makes my eyes water but I tell myself that I am too strong to cry, even though my boys tell me that men do cry.

I had someone ask me if I could have anything in this world back what would it be. I told him my number one boy; even if it was only one day it would be the best day in my life, to just kick it like the old days. He was like a brother to me and considered family at my house. Day and night, man we were hella tight. When one of us fought we both fought. People used to ask me why were so close and I would say, "Why does shhhh stink?" I think if I had a choice to go and let him come back I would. That's how much love I got for him.

-Jonathan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your boys are right – crying is good for everybody, including men; this doesn't make you weak, it makes you human. There are friends that are irreplaceable. They are people who just fit into your world and help make it better. You know they will be there forever. It's hard to lose friends like these, especially at such a young age. People always say that time heals all; you will never get over the loss of your friends but it will get easier.

slow yo' roll
'cause you don't wanna be
at the new hall
in two thousand seven

Be The Man

life is hard
but you gotta pull through
don't worry 'bout nobody else
just worry about you
'cause these streets out here
is cold
trust me i know
i been in 'em since the age of nine years old
you gotta stand tall
and let no man knock you down
keep the fake far away
and the real close around
and please don't fall in love
wit' yo' girlfriend
'cause when you broke and hurt
she gon' be gone wit' the wind
go by yo' first mind
don't follow them
be yo' own man
so followers can say look at him
lil ninja do right
and be pleasant
slow yo' roll
'cause you don't wanna be at the new hall
in two thousand seven
do good by yo' mama
and look after yo' sister
when she go' through pain
you be wit' her
you the man of the house
look me in the face
when yo' family starvin'
you put food on the plate
daddy going to be away for awhile
don't cry
wipe them tears
and give yo' dad a smile
keep yo' head up
be cool
life is hard
but you gotta pull through

-Lil' Eddie, 150 Crew

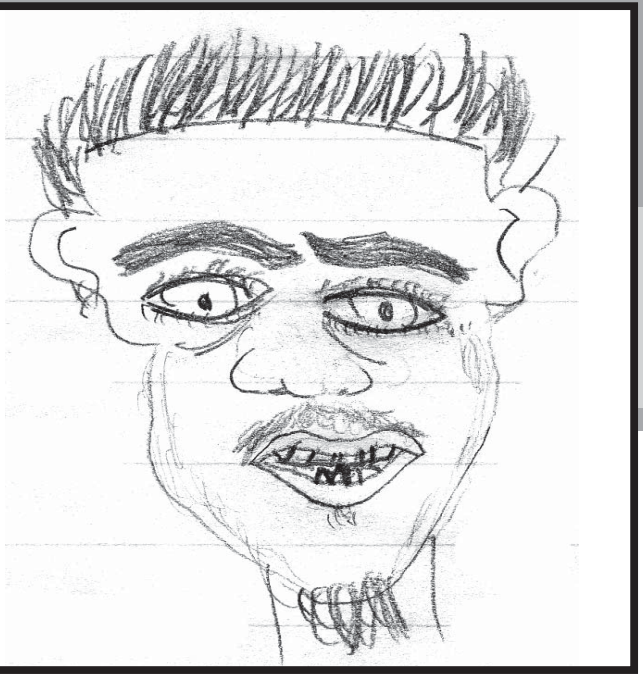
From The Beat: When you choose to put it on a positive tip, there's no one in our pages better at it! When you put your life-long experience in the street to a positive use, you transform all those past mistakes into something way past coo' — 'cause there are lots of young folks who will never hear us but who will listen to you precisely because of where you've been and what you used to do. Thanks for laying down these golden rules for the youngsters ready break free from the system — and follow you!

Virginity

pure
white
sacred
holy
It was taken from me at the age of a young teen
Stolen like a thief in the night
Never to be forgotten and never to be replaced
Never to be handed back to me
always to be remembered
My virginity
my beacon of hope
Snatched
Taken
Ripped
Not borrowed
but stolen.
At fifteen
Now...
known to be un-pure,
never to walk the aisle in white
Marked by society as tainted
No longer a lil' girl
but not yet a woman
All I am known as...
now.

-A Rape Victim, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Powerful words you spill on paper. It hurts us to hear these horrible stories. We can only imagine what you have felt and feel like. Unfortunately, many young girls out there know exactly what that feels like. It's not your fault. You can get past this experience – life goes on. What would you like to be known for? (You are an excellent writer) Use this experience to teach others the horrors of being violated.



Just Me

Have you ever thought of why you made the decisions you made? Well I do. There're days I feel like jumping out of a window, like it's the right thing to do. I even sit and think of why Jonathan didn't kill me when he had the chance? There're so many "what ifs" and "buts" in my life that I lost count.

There are also things I could never forgive myself for. I never thought in a million years I would be where I'm at now. Angela told me I need to talk about the things that happened to me when I was dating Jonathan. Well here it goes. I met Jonathan from my boyfriend at the time named Theo. Theo wasn't physically abusive but he was verbally abusive. I used to ditch school to go to Jonathan's house and party since that was the spot. I eventually, as time grew, fell in love with Jonathan who was Theo's best friend. I would secretly ditch school and go and see Jonathan because we both loved each other and didn't want Theo to find out, but as the days went by he started to suspect things and finally, we broke up. The same day that happened Jonathan and I started dating. The first six months were the best months of my life.

We would die for each other. No matter how much people didn't agree to us being together we stayed together. The only time to me that we were happy was when we had drugs or were on drugs. Finally, on our seventh month of dating I started to do crystal meth with him. I never liked it before and for some reason it was different with Jonathan. When I finally wanted to quit he didn't. I stayed clean for two months before I started using again. I couldn't because it was being smoked in front of me every day. I knew as long as Jonathan was using I couldn't stay clean. Eventually I became pregnant and I knew things had to change in my life, but telling Jonathan I was pregnant was going to be the hardest thing I would have to do. So I told him and he freaked. The house and me were totally ripped apart.

The next morning we woke up and went to Planned Parenthood and found out for sure that I was two-months pregnant. When we went home I didn't want to get out of the car because I knew by the end of that fight I would be in the worst pain ever. So when I got into the house I ran for the bathroom. The fight wasn't as bad as I thought, but I still had cuts and bruises. The day that traumatized me forever was the day of January 5th, 2004. That day I woke up as usual, but to my surprise Jonathan didn't come home that night. But to me that was no surprise. I got up, took a shower and got dressed. As I was finished the door opened and there was Jonathan mad as ever.

He accused me of things till this day that I have no idea of knowing. I got hit so many times in the face that I lost count and I started to lose vision in my left eye. One of my ribs was so badly bruised and my collarbone was broken. My chin was dislocated and my left eye was completely closed. When I thought the fight was over it had only begun! When I packed up my things to leave I made it to the door but next thing I knew I was at the bottom of the stairs in pain. He had pushed me with all his might and I felt it.

At that point my entire life flashed. I never thought I would ever see my family again. I looked up at the sky and said, "God help me and my baby." I laid there on the floor for about ten minutes while Jonathan went inside to get something. I got enough strength in me to get up and run, so I did, and a car pulled over and drove me to a friend's house. I got there and called Jonathan and told him I was ok and it was over and hung up. I was so weak that I passed out and woke up five hours later.

When I woke up it felt like I had wet myself. I went to move the blanket and was laying in a pool of my own blood. I didn't know what to do. All I could do was cry and lock myself in the bathroom. I knew what happened and at first didn't want to admit it. I called Jonathan and he told me it was all my fault and I should die for killing my baby. Ever since that day he made me believe it was my fault but now I know it wasn't. It just took me a while to figure it out. After that day I never went back to him and never will.

-Clover, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We made this a piece of the week for the incredible honesty and courage it took for you to write it. The great mystery to us is how someone as smart as you could allow a man, any man, to treat you the way Jonathan treated you. The fact of the matter is that he has committed one of the most serious crimes anyone can commit, and that is terminating the life of another, in this case, your unborn baby. That tells us that he is totally unworthy of you, that he thinks only of himself, that his future is likely to be as a prisoner, or worse — and, most of all, that your life will be 100% better with him out of it. On the other hand, we can tell that you are a sensitive person, a person of great integrity (we can't believe that after the beating he gave you, you still had the decency to call him and tell him you were all right), and one whose future can be as big and triumphant as you choose it to be. You have our greatest sympathy in this terrible thing that has happened to you, Clover, but you also have our greatest belief that you will find someone who treats you with the love and respect you deserve, and that you will make a very fine mother one day. Never, never go back to a man like Jonathan or a drug like crystal meth.

I've gone so long hiding my emotions that I don't know if I've ever felt love for someone else

The Anger Inside Me

Why is any other emotion besides anger considered a weakness? I don't remember the last time I told my mother I loved her. Then again I never asked myself, "Do I love my mom?" I guess I never had to ask myself that question because I have known since I was 10-years old that I hated her, from the way she coughs and drinks to the way she speaks and dresses. I just remember feeling this since I was a young, young boy.

Anger and hate are the same thing to me. People say I look like my mom. Does that mean I hate myself too? I've gone so long hiding my emotions that I don't know if I've ever felt love for someone else. I care for some people but I have this strong anger in me that I feed upon to go through my day. It's second nature to me.

-Eddie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You cannot go on carrying around all this anger. Anger does very little to anyone except you. You end up paying the price of people that you don't care about or don't care about you. Learning how to let go is one of the hardest but most important things in the world to do. You have been through a lot, more than a lot of kids your age, but don't give up. The world has more to offer than heartache. You can and will love people once you learn how to trust folks. When you get let down by one of the first people you are taught trust it's hard to believe in others. Hard but not impossible.

Believe

I believe in you... in your beautiful spirit, your goodness, in the way that you face each day with a commitment to your life and the things that really matter.

I believe in the decisions you make in the careful consideration you give each challenge, in the perseverance you've shown when others might have misgivings.

I believe that you possess an extraordinary strength and endless reserve of resilience even more than you realize.

Jennifer, you are a person of enormous courage, someone truly special in this world, a rare and beautiful gift to me and Aadyn and all...

And I hope you'll never forget that I believe in you.

JOHNNY VELASQUEZ

Mostly a man of the heart (you can tell by his two poems and blog to his girlfriend), but also versatile in his subjects (he gave us other writings too), this next man is a regular in our Beat Without pages. When he's writing love poems, he's stealing our hearts but when he's writing about self-reflection and introspection, he's really giving us something to think about. He even closes with a piece about not conforming because then you'll just be doing what everyone else is doing. Which we agree with to a certain extent. Sometimes we have to conform in order to put ourselves in a position where we don't have to conform. He's writing from a California State Prison in Chino, CA.

Thief Of Hearts

Jennifer,
I am a thief of hearts they say.
My kisses take your breath away
I'll creep into your dreams at night
Your innocence will soon take flight
My touch will cause your heart to pound
Your lips release the sweetest sound
As both our bodies fuse as one
But wait...this Johnny has just begun
I'll fly you to that special place
Where pleasure glows upon your face
I'll fill your soul with so much love
It's what your heart's been dreaming of
We'll bask within the after glow
Of passion few will ever know
Surrendering without a fight
Then cuddle till the morning light
I realize you're not like the rest
And feel them rhythms leave my chest
The reason I am drawn to you
You're just like me... a thief of hearts too

Nonconformity

"Conformity" means being like everyone else. What bothers me is when the person who isn't like everyone else gets labeled as being a trip, you know weird! Just because they're unique and they follow their own beat, no one understands them. So for that reason, they're different. This ignorant people think that if they don't stick labels on them like soup cans, then they are the ones who are weird.

Conformists are cowards, afraid of being different, like it's the ultimate sin or something. Most of the people in here force themselves to listen to the same music and talk the same way and live the same boring lives. That's not who they are deep down inside! They're putting up fronts and being shallow and not being themselves. Is that what everyone calls "normal?"

There's no way in hell I'd do that to myself. That's practically self-mutilation. I'm just gonna continue and be who I am, be myself. There's a red rose in the field of weeds. I'm the rose. Y'all conformists are the weeds.

Castles And Dreams

Jennifer, if thoughts could paint pictures that words dare not speak
Dream built castles of that, which one seeks,
Then artists and architects all would we be,
Our hearts would be open, our mind would be free
Mija, I'd build you a castle as dreams do unfold
Revealing the feelings I secretly hold
Hey, gorgeous, I'd paint you a picture of words left unsaid
They feelings of closeness to which they have led
Pictures are thoughts that can never be told,
For fear of appearing too forward and bold
Ms. Jen, castles are built in the dreams of the heart
A lifetime of wishes still lifetimes apart
Yet, for Johnny and Jennifer, they are both so much rich
For all that they feel, no matter how farfetched,
No matter how real. For, joy is the picture we paint in our minds,
Baby for love is the castle our hearts hope to find.

Take Me As I Am

The arch of my back as I stand upright
The boldness on my face
This smooth touch of every curve
Take me as I am
With every imperfection to my Acknowledgement
And even those I can't admit
Take me as I am
Embrace my individuality my wisdom
My youth
And my divine spirituality
Take me as I am
No need to curve my tongue, I make Plenty of mistakes
For I am still young and often
Keep myself strong
Take me as I am
Only god is my judge
For I am what I set myself to be
Take me as I am
Watch how I set my mind and grow
The things I accept, the things I know
I am only one person, my name is Johnny
And I am a true person... true to myself
And to those I love
Never the need to hide although
I might say goodbye
For I am what I am, and who I am
Is me,
Never duplicated; I'm one of a kind
As you can surely see
Take me as I am

Who I Am

To be strong and bold
To be brown and proud
Is to be loud and down
This is who I am
Standing still,
Like the earth beneath my feet
I am who I was meant to be
From the day I was born
To my journey into the unknown
I am here now, the brilliant revelation
To my family's new generation
I am a genuine creation
I am here to make a change
This is who I am
There is no mistaking me for another
I am given gentle embraces
And reach a hyna with soft words
And create a special moment to
Give my sweet touch and firm caresses
My intellect reaches far beyond
And only few can comprehend
Our world of understanding
This is who I am
A gentle breeze, much like my needs
Appear fairly simple and carefree
I am forgiving and keeping it real and honest
With my own sense of purity
I got so many thoughts, ideas, and recollections
Unspoken memories for I am simply me
This is who I am

MICHAEL MCKINNEY

Writing from Florida State Prison in Raiford, Florida, we bring to you a man who's graced our pages many times before. This week we've been blessed to receive three stellar poems from him. In his first he speaks about 'sharing times' with someone who he obviously loves very much. And when you find someone like this, someone you want to share many times with, it should be appreciated while it's there because who knows when something that special may end. In his second, 'Learning To Be Me,' he takes us on a journey through his mind so we could find out what it took for him to be him. It's our personal favorite this week... Then, he concludes with reasons why he speaks his mind. And what a beautiful mind it is...

Speaking My Mind

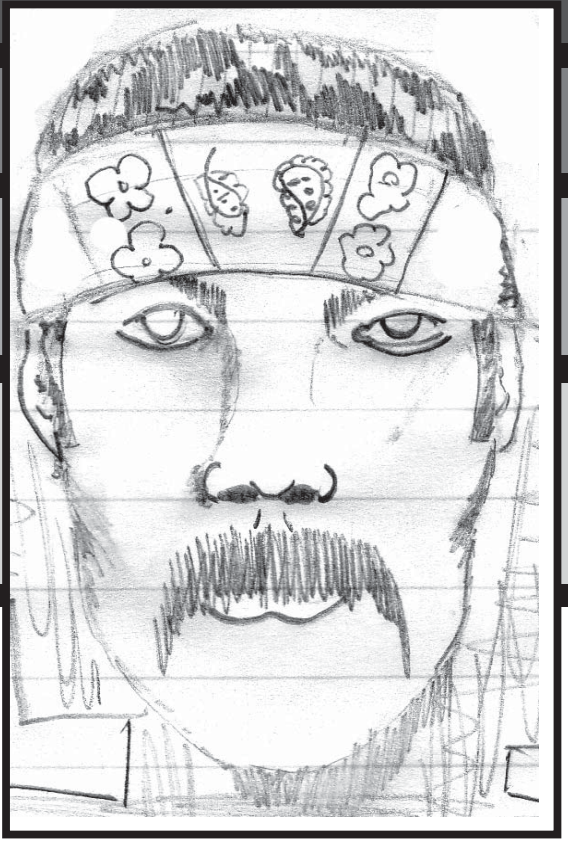
Speaking my mind is a way of sharing my thoughts and the way I feel And I speak my mind without cutting any slack.
So most times with my words I don't tend to hold back
When I'm speaking my mind.
I don't mean to harm sometimes I speak my mind just to have fun Speaking my mind I feel that is best
Speaking my mind helps put my thoughts to rest
And speaking my mind is always kind,
But most times I speak my mind the thoughts be right on time.
I speak my mind with my best sharing and caring thoughts.
When speaking my mind I don't hold no one at fault.
I speak my mind to help someone see they wrong doing
And to correct they error
Speaking my mind sometime may seem to be out of turn
But I speak my mind just to show my concern
Just to let others learn of my concern
Speaking my mind to be encouraging.
And my thoughts that I speak will never be discouraging.
Speaking my mind when teaching you to learn
Speaking my mind just to confirm
And help settle the truth speaking my mind
So you can acknowledge my out spoken thoughts
With your attention my thoughts shall be caught
In a way of being understanding
To my out spoken speaking my mind
Like my thoughts are a golden token
Speaking my mind thinking of love at first sight
Letting my thoughts flow when I know they are right.

Sharing Times

Sharing times I spend with you,
Sharing times of just me and you
Sharing times we have spend together
Hugging, kissing and close to each other like a feather.
Sharing times are hard to forget.
Sharing times more then a little bit,
Sharing times with open wits
Sharing time with the beast of smiles that keeps us together,
Sharing times in love and with unity,
Sharing times in the community
Sharing times bring about communion.
Sharing times lets you know I will be there
Sharing times helps to know that we care
Sharing times with the best of an understanding
Sharing times without being demanding.
Sharing times comes in handy
Sharing times that makes me love
Sharing times that fall from up above
Sharing times with many emotions and feeling,
Sharing times with some healing
Sharing times when our tears are falling.
With the best of our cry
Sharing times without even asking why
Sharing times that we always miss, and that special kiss
You bless me with sharing times
With love being shared in our conversation,
Sharing times that will never be wasted
Sharing times cause that's what friends are for
Sharing times just to be adored
Sharing times that you can never ignore.
Sharing times with the best of our true intention
Sharing times in a whole 'nother dimension
Sharing times with highest integrity,
Showing the strongest morals and principles
We have for each other
Sharing times with you like I have share with no other
Sharing times like this helps us to reach out even further.

Learning To Be Me

Learning to be me was nothing easy for me to do.
I went through so much hardship
Until my life sometime would turn blue.
Knowing many wise things
That would always keep me ahead of the game
But my mind with it's wrong thoughts
Tricked me into going against the grain,
And that would get me into more trouble than a lil' bit
And learning to be me was my perfect fit,
And learning to be me was, a way of learning to accept myself,
And be myself,
And learning to be me brought so many tears from my eyes.
Tears of pain, some tears of joy.
Learning to be me was a very hard fight ahead.
And there was times in my life I wish I was dead
But god kept me struggling for my life 'cause he knew what was ahead
And now I have come to learn
That god had planned my life to turn out this way from the start
'Cause the first day of my birth he knew I was going to be hard.
Learning to be me meant taking so many down falls in my life.
And I learn not to act without thinking twice
And learning to be myself at times could have cost me my life.
Learning to be me was a u turn I had to make by looking inside myself, 'Cause I was headed down a hill, in many ways of self destruction,
For not being a leader of my own life.
Learning to be me, open my eyes up to so many things
And has help me grow a mind through so much pain
And learning to be me, has helped me to stand the rain,
When I am hurting and in pain.
And learning to be me was one of my biggest gains.



Sin

Sin is like cancer
That starts out undetected
But as it goes unchecked
The whole body is affected
It changes the way we think
And also the things we do
As the cancer of sin grows
It takes control of you.
Jesus is the only cure
Just ask Him into your heart
And as you turn from sin
He'll begin a brand new start
Life may not be easy
Because we reap what we sow
But it will have a different meaning
Walking with Jesus as we go.

Relief

Being locked up is tough
For this we know to be true
But only God's love replaces
The void in the hearts of
Those missing you.
So in your time of grief
Don't have any despair
Rejoice in these troubled times
Know that God is there
Be comforted in your times
Of sorrow and distress
For in Christ Jesus
They shall know true rest.

Growing Old

Growing up my life was messed up
From heroin to crystal till I got locked up
From robbing and stealing
Then all the drugs I was dealing
A lot of people I'd hurt
I did all that was wrong instead
That's how I was raised
To no God I praised
I never had any pain
It was like I had a cold brain
They say I had a heart of gold
But why then am I growing old
Yet I don't have anyone to hold
I knew my actions were too bold
I will die one day I am told

RAYMOND MORIN ***Have you ever heard the saying, "Hurt people, hurt people?" Meaning that people who have been hurt earlier in their lives will probably be the ones hurting people later on in their lives. That's the big downfall of our country... We pump our little ones with messages that it's okay to kill if we're the 'good' guys, yet when a child really kills or commits a crime, we hold that child totally responsible for their actions. You can't vote, drive, buy liquor or cigarettes until you reach a certain age, but commit a murder at the age of fourteen and you will probably be tried as an adult. Things of that nature are what mold us into that horrendous labeling people give us — criminal, thief, killer, rapist, etc. This next writer has been through his share of obstacles and has also made his share of mistakes, however, now he's reaching out to us so we can learn from his life. He's writing from Arizona State Prison in Florence, Arizona. We hope to hear more from him soon.***

A lot of people I'd hurt
I did all that was wrong instead
That's how I was raised
To no God I praised

Doing Time Again

There are so many signs
God gives to us why don't
We heed His call
He warns us about the bad things
But all we do is fall
There are so many good things in life
He gives us each and everyday
So why don't we just listen
And bow our heads and pray
Yes, you see there is a better life out there
I will tell you once again
But if you don't stop, listen, and
Pray, we'll be doing time again

My Crazy Life

I am not a poet nor have a GED, I have been quiet for too long with no one to listen to me. Now with The Beat Within I have a chance to express myself for the first time in my life. I am a pocho, a "half breed." I grew up with an alcoholic dad and a mom that just plain didn't care.

I'd started my crazy life at the age of eight, getting high in every way I could. At the age of 12 I got arrested for possession of marijuana by the age of 15 I was stealing cars for the Feds in Mexico, a thousand dollars a car. At the age of 17 I got busted for smuggling weapons into Mexico. I did fed time three years in a Mexican prison, tried as an adult, in 1997 I came to prison in Arizona and I'd joined a prison gang called The Border Brothers. In three years I became a captain, but then I was given orders to kill the family members of several rival gangs leaders.

I'd ask myself who am I to kill innocent people so I went through a step down program here in Arizona and I covered my patch "the symbol of the Border Brothers" and in 2002 me and my big sister walked in on my dad who was raping my little sister. One thing led to another and I'd killed him now I am serving 18 years for second-degree murder. My mom passed away, my two sisters got killed as well as my big brother. I am all alone I would like to say don't take life for granted, live life to it's best don't be left out and miss the blessings of every day.

My mom passed away, my two sisters got killed as well as my big brother. I am all alone I would like to say don't take life for granted, live life to it's best don't be left out and miss the blessings of every day.

MEXICATL ***Giving us the notion that compassion can and will influence change, he writes from a place of love and concern. We've always enjoyed his writing and this week is no different. He gives us part 2 of a lesson he's trying to teach us and it has everything to do with working together in order to revolutionize ourselves, so we can then do the same for the rest of the world. Sort of along the lines of each one, reach one, where we develop a network of positive information and experiences that our whole network can learn from. He's writing from New Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA. We all appreciate his information and we know you will too...***

Part 2

"Every true man must feel on his own cheek the blow to the cheek of another." — (Marti Jose, Cuban Revolutionary, 1853-1895)

When I last wrote, I touched on the failures of the educational systems and how they treat the youth of this country. If you read that, I ask you now to take this into consideration, and understand that all members of society have an obligation to feel all the miseries occurring to the youth of California and across the USA.

Compassion should be your introduction to join the struggle of change. Some of you are young in age and character and in your illusions, but life has given you the tool of experience, so use that tool to feel the needs and aspirations of those around you.

I now challenge you to be who you are, to work to become disciplined in your manner and without hesitation join the struggle of your peers and become leaders in the movement for change, this is feasible, you must read and study, to become a different thinking individual and strive together with the working people of this country/state. To transform your world, to renew and revel in the joy of being young, don't let the judicial system continue taking what is a God given gift, your youth and freedom.

Mother Nature has a reflection and it's called "the past." It's the mirror for the human diary. In this reflection we can see the start of this monster, taking year after year from our youth the 50/50 chance that never existed. I'm sure that in the past you didn't pay much attention to this monster, you just rode on its back and wondered to yourself why the road got so bumpy at times.

You must decide how to jump off this monster without getting hurt or helping others in the process. Understand your priorities and ask for advice as to where you should be going. The biggest corporations on this capitalist nation have groups they hire for advice, as to where they should be going, why can't you? Every morning ask yourself "what can I do to improve myself and everyone around me?" Give yourself the time to make a plan and where it is you want to end up. Empower those around you with knowledge, because in this country you have to know what your rights are and always remember that kindness is a true religion.

Always focus and staying in school, regardless of how run down they are. Education is the forefront of any struggle and part of that education is that you don't have to give up the image of your culture.

The way you're living your life now should compel you to educate yourself, that's your civic responsibility, everything is connected. Representation for change must be your connection to everything, advocate for those who have not reached your level of understanding.

You can only struggle, if you understand the reality of your situation and the reality is that this state knows the violated rights committed against our youth today. They do this only because it is their time in history along with their capitalist bosses to get away with it. The day will come for their empire to fall. As it is said in peace and in war "nothing last forever." The transformation will occur before their eyes, till then you must recognize that every effort you dedicate to your betterment through education is a positive token you give to the struggle, as you are contributing to the good of all.

Seek to raise your personal, social, political, consciousness to expose the role of the youth prison system, even if we don't see that fruit of our seeds. We hope to God that we who are bettering our self are creating a better world for our children and generations to come.

To end this piece of my writing I give you all a little piece of my strong holds and hopefully the understanding to my beliefs. They are rooted from my Mexican history, I will sum it all in quoted words describing the start of the Revolution in Mexico. "In 1909 there came a humble man from Morelos, in the south of Mexico, to declare the grievances of his fellow peasants. This man was named Emiliano Zapata. His powerful direct yet dreamy gaze affected all who saw him"

This great man, had a belief that will live forever "Everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves, long live the Revolution."

So take these words and give yourself freely to your betterment, as it is said by those before us.

LIL' SPANKS ***Some of us need more than others to make a change. Some of us are locked up with the same ways of thinking that got us there in the first place. And others are on that borderline where they really want to change — you can see it when you read their writings — but still find excitement in their past lives. One thing's for sure, time waits for no one. So once a life is gone there's usually no going back, and even if there is going back, it's not what we once knew. This next writer sounds like he's one of the ones on that borderline. But only time will tell, so who are we to judge. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. We first met him in our workshops down in San Jose.***

The Art Of Doing Time

To conquer the art of doing time
I avoid memories that often attempt to invade my mind
You see... not all are able to live this life
You'll see the strong who take it and stride
You'll see the weak who can't take it and commit suicide
Now that's a cowards story, one I don't know, so I'm unable to tell
But to replay the things my eyes have seen within this hell
I often wonder if I'll ever return back to my true self
Despite the wasted years behind prison walls in which I hail
I dwell
On all the day I've cheated myself
My potentials, my energies
I've channeled into so much negativity
Knowing everything catches up, eventually
For so long my mind has been stuck on one track
Felt untouchable cause I stayed strapped
On top of the world and all that
Many know this feeling and can relate
By living grimey
Hoping someone would try me
Cause ain't nothing breaking through my hate
For keeps is the game
To play... cost the ultimate stakes
If you're willing to pay that price
You must learn the meaning of sacrifice
And master sleep with open eyes
Live fast, die young
Clutching the trigger to my gun
My instincts to survive
Are depended on makeshift knives
Cause it's about who lasts longer
Not who dies stronger
Some have this concept all wrong
If so, you're bumping the wrong song
Channel to a new tune and move on
Only a stubborn fool wouldn't change his own ignorant mind
This I now realize
After the path I've chosen isn't really worth my time in life
I made a left instead of a quick right
But hey
Everyday
Something new I learn
And one thing for sure
The calendars continue to turn
But you burn and you'll get burned
Cause we always get paid by the same coin.
Sooner or later

No Bars No Borders

There is no greater criminal label in American society than to be marked a felon. Felons are stigmatized, profiled and discriminated against.

In many states felons cannot vote, are forbidden from certain licensed careers, prohibited from public housing or other assistance and are generally feared. Feared because when many people think of felons the most heinous of criminal acts come to mind: murder, rape and child molestation. However, many people fail to realize, as with California's Three Strikes law, that a felon can merely be a repeat petty thief, an unrehabilitated drug addict or a man who simply got into a fist fight as a youth. In California there is no statue of limitation for prior convictions, and it is common practice for the state to retract decades old misdemeanors and re-characterize them as felonies.

As such, it is no wonder millions of immigrants, human rights advocates and other humanitarians across the country have mobilized an impressive opposition to a bill that would make felons of undocumented immigrants and anyone caught assisting them.

The bill, H.R. 4437, introduced by Congressman James Sensenbrennerr (R, Wisconsin), would make undocumented immigrants vulnerable to felony sentencing from 1 to 20 years. It would also make those who employ immigrant baby sitters, painters and farm workers, along with good Samaritans who help them, criminals.

Apparently not much forethought went into how such an influx of incarceration would affect the prison population. There are currently some 2.1 million prisoners confined in U.S. prisons. The incarceration rate exceeds every modern nation, and has well surpassed any previous domestic prison population.

If just one-third, or 3 million of the twelve million undocumented immigrants, employers and good Samaritans were to suddenly find themselves behind bars, our current overcrowded prison population would more than double in a blink.

As it stands, our jails and prisons are overflowing. A series of recent brawls in the Los Angeles County jail system, where one prisoner died and several others-including Sheriff's deputies-were injured, is indicative of the consequences of reckless and dangerous overcrowding.

Scarce and inadequate resources lead to malicious melees over any and everything: from very limited library seats, to rationed food, to strong-armed struggles for decent cells and bedding.

Despite a 1957 United Nation's prohibition against double bunking, the U.S. has continued to circumvent Resolution 633 for nearly 30 years; claiming "emergency overcrowding," the loophole permitted as a "temporary measure" for such conditions.

A caldron of chaos has subsequently been created by consistently broadening the scope of felonies from offenses once considered misdemeanors.

In California, the overcrowding has led to crisis in prison medical care so horrific that an average of one inmate was dying per week. In early April, U.S. Judge Thelton Henderson intervened by appointing a federal monitor to oversee the prison system's grossly negligent medical department.

California knows first hand the ills of prison overcrowding. Since the enactment of the Three Strikes law – deemed the most repressive in the nation – the overburdened most repressive in the nation – the overburdened prison system has added 43,000 primarily non-violent prisoners to its cast domain in just under 12 years. To adjust to the influx, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger proposed constricting two more multi-million dollar prison sties during his state of the state address in January. The two proposed penal institutions would add to the 33 prisons the state currently oversees. Schwarzenegger's proposal comes in perfect timing for the announcement of H.R. 4437.

California's prison system, the largest in the nation, supervises 173,000 adult and juvenile inmates and wards, and is responsible for another 115,000 parolees at large.

Around the nation, the fast-paced prison expansion has been a windfall for the business community. By 1999 at least 17 states were in contracts with 20 for profit private prison companies that collected more than a quarter of a billion dollars in revenues from taxpayer dollars. The proliferation, like ante-bellum slavery, is all about the body count. The more bodies, the more profit. Profits are indeed high and very few of the facilities offer work training and education programs that have been shown to reduce recidivism.

Meanwhile, California taxpayers have seen the annual budget for its prisons increase to $8.6 billion, from an already obscene $6 billion the previous years. With close to 300,000 prisoners, the states prison budget dwarfs the annual budgets of many small countries, including some of our neighboring island nations in the Caribbean. For instance: Antigua and Barbuda have a population of 66,464 and an annual budget of $141.2 million. The annual budget for Belize is $142 million, for a population of 249,982 and the annual budge for the Bahamas is $845 million for population that exceeds California's prison population at 294,982.

A more striking comparison is that of Bahrin, a small state in the Persian Gulf that has more than double the population of California's prison population with 634,137 people, yet manages to maintain an annual budget of $1.9 billion – just a fraction of what it costs to run California's wide web of prisons.

Critics attribute the high cost to inflated prison guard salaries, brought about by one of the most rewarding contracts in their history, while their rate of overtime often leads to repeated overruns.

There are many reasons for the enormous cost of prisons, in California and the nation as a whole. The price is already too high to afford H.R. 4437 to label innocent people felons, increase the prisons profit and commit a great moral and humanitarian betrayal by incarcerating millions of people who crossed an imaginary line. People whose presence has been encouraged and incorporated into the economy now face being maliciously turned against and locked up.

The further demonizing of "illegal" immigrants as felons is deplorable and will only succeed in strengthening the prison system.

DORTELL WILLIAMS ***There are those who teach strictly from experience and then there are those who teach from both experience and insight. What we mean by that is not only do they analyze their experiences, but they also offer their own opinions from those experiences. And to even go further, sometimes even offer statistics like this next writer has. He sent us a couple articles he's already gotten published. "No Bars No Borders" was published in Slingshot in the summer of last year and "What's A Gangbanger?" was published in the Los Angeles Sentinel in the summer of last year also. In his piece "No Bars No Borders" he makes reference to the republican congressman who introduced the bill, H.R. 4437, "which would make undocumented immigrants vulnerable to felony sentencing from 1 to 20 years." This piece was written in August of last year and that congressman isn't a congressman anymore. Just a little bit of current information to accompany a very insightful piece. He's writing from California State Prison, Los Angeles County in Lancaster, CA.***

From Thugs To Scholars

December thirteenth, 2006 marked the first anniversary of the execution of Stanley Tookie Williams. Tookie began his raise to notoriety by co-founding the crips. The thug-life got him the death penalty after over 20-years in a prison cage.

It was there, in that closet-sized cell where he found the real him. An articulate man; full of potential, who, like Malcolm X and Tupac educated themselves with books and forward moving people. They all went on to do great things. Tookie and these other men came to realize that the street life is but an illusion. Education is where it is at and in that vein will their reps forever be remembered.

What's A Gangbanger?

Dear editor,

Barely a day goes by where we don't hear about the menace of gangs in the media. Gang bangers are often depicted as thoughtless, gun toting, cold blooded killers. Yet, underneath the calloused layers if the general depictions are even true, they are kids... our kids.

They are America's kids gone astray. Some are actual members, some merely neighborhood associates and others, in one form or another, are simply misled. We rarely hear their stories because the media airs one sided law enforcement delineations of them.

When listened to, this becomes apparent as the kids grumble over how they are stereotyped and mis-labeled. They gripe of being marked by authorities for their style of dress, their street lingo or merely because of the area in which they reside.

Their point was made evident by the 2005 House passage of the anti gang bill that authorizes the federal prosecution of minors, expands the use of mandatory sentences, the death penalty and completely strips any discretion from the judges. Yet, the bill only narrowly defines what a gang or gang member is. A child could get a life sentence for his mere associations. Imagine how quickly we'd fill up the prisons if we held unethical political party members or rogue cops to such a standard.

Considering the billions of dollars America spends annually trying to change the minds of those involved in the centuries old Middle East conflict, perhaps we might consider a more civil and humane approach to addressing the conflicts of our children here at home.

WILD BILL BARNES

A new writer's on the loose and we're elated to have him in our pages. He's also a cartoonist, so hopefully we can get the cartoon he sent us published (this editor's not in control of that). But we are sure this next poem will reach your hearts and minds with real genuine force. He speaks as if he's a man who's going through the trial and conviction of a crime that will eventually lead him to the electric chair. But not only that, he also describes the situation as if he went through the execution too. It's a very deep poem and can give you insight on what's probably going through the mind of someone we, the people, are responsible for killing. The only thing he didn't describe in the poem was how costly it is to keep someone on death row and then to execute him. It's a brilliant poem from an even more brilliant writer. Be on the lookout for him because we think he'll definitely create a buzz...

The Trial

I shuffled into the courtroom
Shackles jingling out a lonely song
Not much mystery in the air, though
For I know the conclusion was
forgone

All eyes were locked upon me
Looking on with the scorn and disdain
But I knew their time would come
Some other time; some other place

It was all just a "show" trial
The verdict had already been long
reached
All just an invocation,
After the sermon had been long
preached

I was, the prosecutor proclaimed
A man who deserved to die
Gazing at me balefully,
Venom in his eyes

He came off so self-righteously
Like nothing wrong he'd ever done
On the "side of right", he was
anointed personally
By the Father, Holy Ghost, and the
Son

And I saw an Aztec priest
Picking out a victim to sacrifice
Working the crowd into a frenzy
Knowing only blood would suffice

Would suffice to keep the citizens
complacent
Keep 'em satisfied
Just a little "sacrificial show"
Didn't really matter who lived or died

Then they threw up a little scant
"evidence"
That didn't prove a thing
But it didn't really matter
Just as long as they had someone to
blame

The ol' "Public Pretender"
He played his part so well
Yet, you know, for 30 pieces of silver
Your life he would gladly sell

Soon, the jury filed out
Lookin' like they knew things weren't
quite right
But, it gave no cause for hope
For I knew, eventually they'd give in to
the state's might

As they made their way back in
None could look me in the eye
Yet, still their foreman stood up
Sid they'd all agreed: I must die

My mom looked on
Her heart completely broke
And there wasn't a thing I could do
To ease her heavy yoke

Except just say. "I love you"
And I hoped we'd meet again
Somewhere on the other side
But, before that sweet day would come
The lightning I must ride
The lightning I must ride

Well, now I'm in the chamber
Waitin' on the switch that'll end my
life
Throwin' out a few last minute
appeals
To a cosmos, so silent and wide

But I'm just an actor
And all this world's a stage
Takin' my seat in the victim's chair
A role, sooner or later, everyone must
play

And now the jolts are flyin' thru' me
As I kiss this world good-bye
Reachin' up towards my savior
And hoping I can find a spot in heaven
where I can reside
Knockin' on Saint Peter's gate
And just hopin' they'll let me inside

WILLIAM HAMBY

This next piece is a spectacular one... "Alone In Hell" is written by our very own lyrical mastermind — William Hamby. You'll see why we call him a lyrical mastermind when you read his piece. He comes with rhymes, but not just any old rhymes, two and even three syllable rhymes. And he's not glorifying his past life (the one that got him incarcerated) like many of us do. He's speaking some real stuff about where he is — a living hell. What gets us is you look on the California Department of Corrections (and Rehabilitation's) website and they rant and rave about all these great vocational training programs and rehabilitative work they're doing. Yet, we get vast letters from people who are a part of that very same system and it's exactly the opposite. We appreciate this man's gift and are grateful to be able to publish such a masterpiece. He's writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA.

Alone In Hell

Here I am in hell and it ain't holy.
I should have listened when them grown folks told me,
I sit lonely, with only, a pillow in my arms to hold me,
Or do I hold it? I remember when they scolded,
I was told that, if I hit them streets I would go back,
Hard head I pack toast under my throwback,
Tell me I'm wrong I'll tell you "I know that,"
Still them packs I hold cracks, dough stacks,
Lust for 64's and old 'lacs, now I feel I'm turning pro-black,
Malcolm style, me the stallion got no smile,
My medallions is gone now, killers on death row now,
Wifey gone you miss yo' child, gangster style is old now,
Still I won't snitch like these hoes do now,
And I don't mean females, I mean these men who act like she-males, tucked between tales, look how we fail,
Hundreds of years ago when we set sail,
Times get harder and we just bail,
Scared of cops so we now slaves in jail,
We never speak up for our rights we only yell for mail,
Now I see we got souls for sale, we all trapped all alone in hell,
Will we survive time gone tell,
I got a bleak picture, for the future that fits 'ya,
This is hell remember, on the streets front lines I fell straight center, a dumb ninja, should a, lifted my sword swifter,
'Cause now I sit emotions injured,
Still at war with racism and non-sense,
Trying to get these lyrics published,
I'm everything they fear and wonder,
Sort of amazement, to these satans,
It's all good watch holy angels replace 'em, erase 'em,
God in Heaven gone chase 'em, read revelations,
Get your mind out the basement,
I know I'm scaring y'all who's soul need saving,
My soul need saving, the earth as a whole need saving,
Can I help wit' these words that I'm laying,
Inside my heart the hurt is still staying,
Instead of murder I'm praying, these urges keep waiting,
Do I deserve where I'm staying, I heard what they saying,
Leave me where I be, till I'm 40, ha ha they caught me,
D.A. swearing I'm naughty, many hoping they off me,
Mentally killing me softly,
The other reason is they insecure, unsure,
And me the Pharoah's blood is pure, like Thutmosis,
Caveman's cant close this, my soul floating,
To another realm with Joseph, or Jesus Mary or Moses,
This world ain't for me I know this, please take notice, angels closest, No pigs can roast us, I know that, they wanna rip me open,
The Lord is watching while fools is scoping
And as I write that's my way of coping,
Still I'm no preacher fake like Kenneth Copeland,
"Over Flow?" What you know, 'bout how I sleep cold on the floor',
No clothes no more, hungry and kicking the steel door,
I feel raw, but I can't say I don't feel no more,
The more hell the more pain I endure. Amen.

The game, what is the game
Red or blue isn't it all the same
Shot or stab full of pain
And at the end six feet deep is where you stand...

The Game

The game, what is the game?
To me is all the same
Red or blue is what we claim
But at the end, it's mom that suffers from pain...

The game, what is the game
Is it what we call a gang
Where you give your life for a friend
But at the end six feet deep is where you stand...

The game, what is the game
Is it where you are late night kicking it with the homies
While your mom is sitting home alone full of worries
And at the end you find yourself with nothing but loneliness

The game, what is the game
Is it where you stand and post on your block
Where you are then chase away by the cops
And at the end you find yourself behind bars...

The game, what is the game
Red or blue isn't it all the same
Shot or stab full of pain
And at the end six feet deep is where you stand...

The game, what is the game
Because of the game you find yourself behind these walls
With nothing else but a little bit of hope
And at the end the only one you have is the Lord...

EMILIO PEREZ ***The game — some of us follow it without even questioning it. Others are smart enough to wonder why it is the way it is. This next writer gives us one poem, but translates it into Spanish too. It's a real eye opener as he asks questions we think most people should ask if they considered themselves in the game. He comes to his own conclusions, which are probably different than the conclusions some of you will come to, but all in all, you at least have to respect his opinion because he's not being robotic enough to follow something without questioning it. That takes an act of courage from a strong soul. He's writing from a California State Prison.***

El Juego

El juego, que es el juego?
Para mi todo es lo mismo
Azul y rojo es lo que clamamos y peleamos
Pero al final un dolor muy grande encontramos...
El juego, que es el juego?
Es lo que llamamos nuestra grande pandilla
Pero sin saber nos encontramos en una dora pesadilla
Es cuando das la vida por un amigo.
Pero al final te das cuenta que mueres por tu enemigo.
El juego, que es el juego?
Es cuando tu estas en el poste de tu arca
Cuando eres la presa preferida, de un official con rabia
Y al final de cuentas, te encuentras detras de las barras
Sufriendo y purgando una condena por algo que tu amabas...
El juego que es el juego?
Azul y rojo, no es solo un simple color
Acuchillar o disparar causan un inmenso dolor
Y encontrandote seis pies bajo tierra, ya no cuenta tu valor...
El juego que es el juego?
No es nada valioso es solo un juego.
No es nada hermoso solo causa desprecio
Y cuando te das cuenta, entre cuatro paredes te encuentras preso
Con nada a tu lado, ecepto un poco de esperanza
Y pidiendole al Señor, que te libere sin tardanza...

E-MONEY ***For a minute there we thought we had lost him, but low and behold the old E-Money is back and he's dropped a real deep and dark piece on us this week. E-Money was in 850 (San Francisco County Jail) a minute ago fighting a case and while he was there we were getting a lot of love poems from him. Which is cool, but we sort of missed the deep thinking E-Money we grew to know. Now he's writing from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA, and like he's said in his letter to us, "has got his swagger back." We really appreciate it and of course we enjoyed his piece. He goes in and out of rhyming and just writing a regular essay form piece to convey to us no matter which way people go we seem to be stuck in old ways of thinking and we have to get out of that 'being stuck' state in order to truly change. Maybe we'll learn from E-Money before it's too late. Thanks for bringing 'you' back... We first met E Money when he was fighting for his life in the SF/YGC max unit.***

Stuck

As I sit here in this 4' by 9' ancient San Quentin cell, my mind is deep in thoughts escaped with sunrays that struggles to penetrate through the filth of these castle like windows. I'm remembering a time I gave laughter in honesty, a smile in sincerity, and it's like knives to my soul to know my heart is currently enslaved to rot in the misery of pain. I often wonder how can I get back to that place of love, but this hate got me swinging at devils blind, falling deeper into their pits of hell with every miss. Can't nobody see that my soul is burning on the inside and my tears isn't enough to extinguish its fire. If this life was meant, I guess I'm hell sent. For I been knocking on heavens doors and I ain't been receiving nothing but demon responses. When I walk, I walk in pain and when I talk, I talk in pain. It's like this angel boy has gone possessed. If death is my destiny lord please hurry and bury me with the rest, for so far I have received an 'F' in this life's test. They say, "If you be patient you will see better days," but I've been feeling so much pain I'm wondering if I'm going to find the happiness to enjoy them when they come. I guess I'll one day get my chance to shine. But until then I'll be crying with the rain.

"Life got to get better than this," that's what I tell myself everyday I wake up in this pit and you can tell that I'm disgusted by the way that I spit. This limited society got me going craaazy. It's like I'm intoxicated with the leftovers of the polluted air they used to kill Tookie. The revolution is dying here in front of our eyes and we can't do nothing but watch them hang our last hope like black folks used to get hanged through ropes. And I understand nowadays it ain't no color thing but don't let the world rob you for your dreams like it tried to do Martin Luther King. It took me almost 27 years to understand that without the freedom and happiness of y'all I ain't got a damn thing.

"Lord let my people go." Geronimo Pratt ain't the only one that was under attack. I'm shouting for freedom fighters that's brown, red, white and black. I'm listening to the pains of the caged brothas that can teach time to Nelson Mandela. They got a story to tell that says "truth" and a knowledge that'll enlighten and restore life to the Am-Bush-ed U.S. troops. The old test could've told you the revelations of Iraq and if you were to read carefully you'll see that 9/11 was more than a racist attack. It's a struggle so you must pull and push. And you'll see the 'truth' lies in George Bush. Dennis The Menace ain't got nothing on Curious George. He got the world shedding blood where there use to be tears. If the eyes is the windows to the soul can you see the fire inside? We live a life emotionally absent wondering where did our love go. Our heart is stone cold with a bruised ego. We want to be God's sons but the devil won't let go. We play in the devil's playground looking for heaven's door. I guess we're stuck buried in the thickness of bad luck. In some ways mentally handicapped and we can't get up.

Note: This is just how I feel sometimes but it's not my overall reality. My writings often times is a way to get the pain outside of me and on paper. Facing it eye to eye gives me all the pieces I need to solve its puzzle. Hopefully you'll find something in this writing to help you further understand who you are. For remember, we need each other to reach the stars

ROYALTY ***This next writer is a new one but we can tell we're quickly going to become addicted to his work. He's writing from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA, and he sends us a letter alongside four great poems. Lyrically, he's a genius sowing words together to form a beautiful quilt of ideas. Our personal favorites are "Casualties Of Pain," and "Chasing Dreams," because in these two poems he really depicts the reality of why he is where he is today. And though, he's probably at fault in some way, he's not totally responsible for the madness that entered his mind at such a young age. In his letter he sort of reaches out to the younger him (that's the kind of passion he carries for the younger generation) and lets himself know that this is what I did and this is what you probably want to do differently. His insight is priceless... maybe we should start charging people for Beats... Just kidding...***

One Way Up

If it don't get done today, we pray!
If we live to breathe tomorrow no sorrows,
For our problems are shallow, from out the shadows,
We tower over weak links and cowards,
Didn't believe we possessed the power,
Deflected the swarm of hollows,
Threatening to pierce through our collars,
We grow mentally not just taller,
We "meant-ta-lead" not ta follow,
You feel me, (holla)
Haters don't even bother,
I flounder to exceed my father's experience,
In this world full of drama,
Starving for knowledge,
In the pit of a dragon's hunger,
We ain't gettin' no younger, (only wiser)
Now take a second to open ya' eyes up, and
What ya' scope will surprise ya',
Shake that brotha beside ya',
Hopin' that blessings won't find ya',
It takes a grinda' ta fight his way to the front of the line,
Ahead of his class,
No use looking behind ya', (WHY?)
Because there's nothing but last,
An extirpated past,
Dilapidated city of sad,
So be glad that you gonna make it,
Let the haters be mad...
There's only one way up...

Casualties Of Pain

When I think of all that you put me through,
Tears swell in my eyes,
While you satisfy your craving to hurt,
I separate body from mind,
Close off the road to reality,
I'll return when it's all over,
Only to go through it again,
Then you'll forget when you're good and sober,
But seems I'm getting older, and
What you've failed to realize, (is)
You've created a monster,
A heartless soldier,
Chip on his shoulder the size of a boulder,
A mentally colder than you could ever fathom, or even imagine,
Something terrible has happened...
See these eyes? (screaming)
Damn it! Look at 'em! (crying)
They're the windows to the soul, (whispering)
Take a closer look butt hole! (screaming)
You know what? Maybe you're too messed up yourself,
To see that your son doesn't even have a soul,
Because of you he's given up all hope,
Because of you he's out of control,
Can't even contain his rages,
So he goes through these episodes...
Everybody's the enemy, (screaming)
Nobody believes in me, (crying)
Where I come from there is no love,
Only pain and grief, (crying)
Only cries and deceit, (crying)
So I hurt and deceive, (laughing)
But why cant you understand that
It's apart of me! (screaming again)
It's apart of them too!!
Look at 'em closely,
Then look back at me,
What do you see? (screaming)
Look closer damn it!! (crying)
The truth is in the eyes,
I lie because I've been lied to,
I wanna love, (whispering)
Bet I've never been loved,
So how the hell am I supposed to love you! (crying again)
Forget you!
You spineless coward!
Who needs you (crying again)
Ha' ha' you can't hurt me any more (laughing)
What's all the screaming for?
The hate that I have stored! (screaming)
What are you angry for?
Because I can't take it no more! (crying)
Why exactly are you crying child, good lord!
I just wanted a hug when I did
Something good, (whispering)
Couldn't get love from them,
So I turned to the hood,
From concrete to wood
From bike pedals to stocked metal,
Willing to die,
For a handful of lies,
Again he cries,
Bet nobody knows why,
Gotta look in his eyes,
Where it's clear and plain,
Like many other guys,
This one's,
A casualty of pain...

Chasing Dreams

Every scene crisp and clean,
Playing blind to messed up things,
Never seen an angel's wings,
But I guess we all got dreams,
I mean who can vouch that there was an Eve,
We ain't never seen God,
Bet we still believe,
Ain't no higher spirits shine they grace on me,
But that don't mean I'm preachin' blasphemy,
Just reality,
I ain't beef seeking,
My quick thinking got someone's jugular leaking,
Either my heart shows feeling,
Or yours stop beating,
From the beginning we were stripped of our dignity,
Separated at birth,
Now it hurts to know momma gets no pity,
Miseducated raised illiterate,
All she know is flash titty,
Me I'll be a dreamer,
But I'll never lose my focus,
I'm not saying that we're hopeless,
We just do crazy shhh to get noticed,
While the positive go un-noticed,
I don't want to be a statistic,
Though I peep the way America got it,
Without a glock and a full clip
You a target.
Waiting to get ya' wig split,
So I pray for a new beginning,
Not for me but for my children,
I've done my living,
Plus I'm tired of dreaming,
When I wake up sweatin',
On the verge of leaving,
I can see the light beaming,
Shining,
Death got bad timing,
Now my seeds out there grinding
Vicious cycle,
Young and hyper: plus fatherless,
So they look up to a street sniper,
Mac the local gang member,
Wake up brother you gotta save ya' daughter!!
You ain't getting nowhere,
Chasin' dreams

Just As I Am

Merely a map
I do all that I can,
To make the best out of these lands,
With no one to lend me a hand,
I gotta scam every chance,
To see my children enhance,
Nobody else gives a damn,
So it's just me and my hands, and
Since I'm on high-risk parole,
A nine-ta-five ain't a part of the plans,
'Bouts to go Yosemite Sam,
Hustlin' 28 grams,
Gotta bubble off half a grand,
To get my folks out a jam,
Lord I come to you,
Just as I am,

ROYALTY (CONT.)

What's Happenin' Beat

This is "Mr. Royalty himself" since nobody knows who I am, or where I come from; I'll tell you a little bit about me. "Emphasis on lil' bit." I've been down for about 6 years. Now, I know, a drop in the bucket for some of the readers right? Well one thing that's for certain that I should let y'all know that I'm a member of the struggle, is the fault that I've been to hell and back, twice! And any of the readers that know me or have met me know that I have the scars (from heart to face) to prove it. Now you don't have to be a rocket scientist to know that I'm from the "streets," man I practically am the "streets," "concrete born." But the reason for me writing is because I want to drop a jewel on some of our younger readers. Only based on the fact that I can sense that some of these young brothas and sistas are on the road to "explode."

Now off the top I'm not doing no preaching because you can get fire and brimstones from Reverend Best–B-Good down at the big while church on Blueberry Hill, feel me? I'm simply aiming to open ya' lookers (eyes) to some real business. See it maybe hard to fathom, but believe it or not I'm not too much older than a lot of the young brothers and sistas that are in the halls and Y.A., and those group homes and camps that get mentioned in The Beat, maybe just a few years older so what does that let you know? That a brotha was a lot younger when I got incarcerated. But see the cold part of it is that I was afforded those same opportunities as some of you younger brothers and sistas, I've been in the halls, camp, I missed Y.A. by a hair and never got to do the group home thang, and let me be frank, though you probably hating the place you at right now, I can just as sure put my balls on the line to bet that you'd be down right "miserable" in prison. I know I am!

Sure you've probably heard the "glory stories" from the older "gees and vatos," but trust me that's just a façade. Deep down them brothas are mortified. If the place was as fun, or straight as they try and make it seem, somebody please explain to me why them same brothas get in the wind at the mention of a squady being in the vicinity? It don't take a brain surgeon to figure that one out, now does it? To make a long message short, you lil' brothas and sistas got to use this lil' time y'all got to figure out your worths, and put 'em to the test. Use ya' gifts towards building a brighter future for you and ya' "unborns." Because that's what its about. Doing ya' thang legitimately, so that you are untouchable to the law! You must focus, concentrate on getting you self together while you still got the chance, which is now!! You wait any longer and you'll be on that grey goose shackled from head to toe! And just so that you know when its on and there's a riot cracking on the yard, nobody's gonna care that you only sixteen! Especially those guards in the tower, sighting down on ya' with those mini fourteens... keep that in mind...

Well that's it for me this time around but before I go here's a few pieces I bled out, hopefully, The Beat doesn't have a problem printing these pieces for all The Beat readers to check out and get a chance to try and understand why my heart bleeds...big ups to The Beat for assisting brothas and sistas, carnals and carnalas struggling in this system god bless...

Sure you've probably heard the "glory stories" from the older "gees and vatos," but trust me that's just a façade.

BROTHA ACHIM

Before we start with this introduction, we must say something that we really don't want to say because we enjoy this next writer's thoughts and opinions. But we have to say it because The Beat Within is open to many different beliefs. Although Brotha Achim is really gifted and has much information to bestow on us, we feel like we're going to have to take some of his writing out in the near future if it is as militant and racially one sided as it is this week. Only because there'd probably be a big buzz at The Beat if we published the very same kind of writing from White people with same agenda for theirs as Brotha Achim has for his. We don't believe in fighting racism with racism and when we through judgments around about groups of people because of their race that's what we're doing. There are other ways to go about it without contradicting what we're fighting for in the first place. All in all we really enjoy hearing from Brotha Achim, but we are guests of the system and need to keep our messages clean for our youth because there are other people, in power, reading this that may not let The Beat operate if we were to tamper with the balance between publish writing that teaches and also making EVERYONE feel like they could use The Beat as a save haven to learn. He's writing from a California State Prison in Soledad, CA. We hope we didn't discourage him from writing because we think his message needs to be heard, but in a way that's more universal and less one sided, for that's what we're fighting against in the first place, right?

Black Rage

I am the alpha/omega of all killers who have become the spiritual embodiment of millions of black victims fro the womb to the tomb, past, present and future, whose hearts and souls cry our for "justice and retribution". In sheer unremitting anger and unbearable, insufferable outrage, stemming from centuries of murder, genocide, rape, brutalization and poisonous-pus festering psychological wounds of ghastly scars that ooze of hatred and utter-vile contempt – that will not heal.

I am deathless, invincible, undefeatable, and avenging warrior athirst seeking vengeance of total elimination or annihilation. An empowered spirit that has been tried, trued, crystallized and resolved "by any means necessary". The product of hatred – I have become the epitome of hate!

I am a hero, the champion of all black champion, an undying, unsonged legend. When violated you will observe the flaring of the nose and fire in the eyes. When my violence becomes uncontrollable, there is no escape, no mercy and I may miss my target.

My rage is a righteous sword, a volcanic-tsunami eruption, spewing forth untold years of repression, dehumanization and atrocities committed against blacks by ungodly, cowardly, insidious racists. Power glutton architects of neo-nazi/fascism in America – who yellow neo stripes glowing down their backs.

I have become the essence of the world's victims turned deadly predator, allied with death, tireless, unrelenting and inexorably committed in the service of the New African blackman's ultimate "holy war" I fear neither God, man or death, I am: BLACK RAGE!

The Ego

The masters of old taught you to condemn the ego. To humble yourself and to move away from the strength of ego. While I cannot agree, I do not disagree. Their thinking was circumstantial, in an attempt to aid humankind at that time-period. The old Master's ignorance of psychology, was reflected in their teachings. Like a doctor trying to cure a disease unknown to his or her experience.

We have evolved faster than the thinking and teaching of those masters. First and foremost, there is no such thing or place as an ego. What is commonly referred to as the ego, is an individual's intellectual energies, designed to cope with the challenges of life. The ego of the primitive individual was condemned, because their internal strength {ego} was the source of their destructive behavior (e.g., wars, rapes, robbery, etc.)

This internal strength {ego} was determined to be a negative force in need of suppression. What the old Masters didn't realize is there are neither negative nor positive energies. By attempting to suppress energy, the very act in and of itself gives that entity strength. Conversely, the internal strength{ego} of the evolved human being is necessary to prevail in our competitive, hi-tech, sophisticated world. This inner-drive is needed to enable the committed individual, to crystallize his confidence in their abilities and knowledge. To better able him or her to make their talents available in our ever-changing, ever-challenging world.

Cowardice

He who is above the age of reasoning, who forgives the grievous transgressions of his true-enemy is a coward. A coward in the face of the enemy is a traitor, an abomination with no place in this world of strife and continuous struggle. Forgiveness is never the right thing to do, it is always a way out, a weakness and a character flaw; you know it and so does your enemy.

He who forgives, will most certainly forget and turn their alertness away and most assuredly live to regret it by becoming his enemy's prey. To say you forgive, but you do not forget is a play on words, a hypocrisy, an oxymoron., hate MUST be met with hate, violence must be met and fought with violence.

Universal law commands you neither to forget nor to forgive – forgiveness will never beget forgiveness – the history of mankind is a glaring example of that truism. Your enemy recognizes your forgiveness as a sign of weakness, lack of commitment to self, to your cause and you failure to stay the course. And as soon as you forget, you enemy has a duty to mercilessly strike a coupe de grace – to reaffirm universal law "that only the strong survive by feeding off the weak."

In an inescapable perilous situation do not expend your energies panickly running away when you have no idea as to where you need run. The odds favor he who stands and fight with conviction, even in the most hopeless of dangerous situations – even until the end. Even if that were not so, it is far more bearable to suffer defeat standing than defect running away.

Commentary (1): "Brotha Nimarodas, I was taught to love my enemies and to forgive over and over again." Between age-old precept without application there is a need for contemporary interpretation. Both love your enemies, besides being an unrealistically-impractical concept, obsolete and jaded, obviously proffered at the time as an evolutionary, futuristic lofty-principle. We live in the here/now and must learn, live and survive by contemporary wisdom. True, one could sacrifice, love and forgive their enemies while being killed or abused – I suspect most would not subscribe to the reasonable person be reconciled with a heavy dose of reality. All lofty concept. Dogmas, rituals, etc without here/now application is nothing at all. This is not to say that one day the human race as as whole will not evolve as a loving. Compassionate creature – but, NOT TODAY!

Commentary (1) the essence of life is to love those who love you, its as easy and as simple as that. To be tolerant, forgiving and compassionated to those who may have lost their way, who have errored in judgment and in their actions. This is not a contradiction between forgiving your loved ones/friends and not forgiving your "true-enemy". We must in our minds and hearts move away from believing and searching for searching for absolutes. None exist, we will have to think for ourself and treat each situation and circumstance as it comes to you. There are no panceas, cover-all rules or laws that you can learn – allowing you to go back to a subconscious state. Plainly put, there isn't anything anyone can say or write that will effectively apply for you in all situations.

Loyalties

The essence of a person, is not to whom their loyalties lie, rather, the integrity of their loyalties. Self-loyalty is more than just an affirmation, it is loyalty in its truest application. In a world where there are more lies than truth, more pain than pleasure; there can only be black or white and no shades of grey. A person of loyalty who can find no kinship amongst others has no recourse saving to be loyal to self. One who loves, must love, even if it is to love oneself. Loyalty to oneself is no different than loyalty to another; it is blind, unyielding, without respects to right or wrong.

Alienation

We are alienated from our authentic selfs and true possibilities, even at birth. No matter what cultural, social economical class or nation we belong to. This basic myopia-vision prevents us from taking any unequivocal view of our insanity or the madness of others; our alienation goes to the very root cause of our selfish, self-serving, opulent, decadent society.

Around us are all pseudo-events to feed the hypocrisy or our pseudo-innocence to which we have learned to identify with, adjusting with a false sense of consciousness, adapted to view these events as norms, true and real. We live in a moment of history where our evolutionary-technological advancements are so speeded up that we can only being to see the present when it has become the dead past; hence, the remembering cries for the good old days.

Our realities are mostly engineered, orchestrated, so "surreal" that it can only be seen in light of exile truth, its beauty seemingly a lie. Moreover, our lives appear either illusionary or nightmarish, reflecting either the illusions of our grandeur or the pain and decay around and within us. We are all ill-grounded and not centered, superficially guided by our greed of accumulation and accomplishments; by our egos and need for instant gratification. We either fabricate honorable dealings and triumph in our songs, fables and folklores. As we have so DISHONORABLY and in America's history books or we have set forth unrealistic, puerile goals of magic, supernatural fears as we have in our umpteen religious dictum/tales.

What is, is described in the light of what is not, already dim by the shadows of the past. At most events we are as bemused, confused creatures, more stranger to ourselves than to one another. Even from an idea standpoint there is only a glimpse of our true selves.

We are born in a world where alienation awaits, potential human beings in a unnatural state. Our present destiny has been achieved by our greed, selfishness, cruel and outrageous violence that we have senselessly perpetrated upon each other.

Nevertheless, the requirements of the presence – as depicted by the failures of the past are to provide a through introspection, and critical examination of our activities, failures and accomplishments.

Unfortunately, we can only being to realize, except from this dysfunctional beginning point... The recognition of this neurosis is the spring board of any serious contemplation on any aspects of our present intra-human relationships.

However, what is required is more than just a passionate outcry of outraged humanity, rather an in-depth understanding of how "our" greed, fears and violence has alienated us from our true selves.

This, we must succeed in learning if we are to ever achieve our natural and true possibilities.

BROTHA ACHIM (CONT.)

...we must succeed in learning if we are to ever achieve our natural and true possibilities.

Losing My Mind

Help! Help!
I think
Quiet!
What if someone hears me
I'm losing my mind
They'll think I'm crazy
I can't have that

I will be put away...treated
Like a crazy person
I am only losing my mind
I am not going crazy

Now – I am talking to myself
But – no one can hear me
It doesn't hurt
So, it mustn't mean anything

I've got to get help
What if no one can help me
Surely – others have lost their mind
-and simply
not talked about it

There seem to be such
a world full of a few angry
hurtful people
Where to turn

I have to get a grip
Let me take a deep breath
Whatever must be done
Only I can do it

I must get control of my fears
No one seems to notice
I can live and survive without my
Mind!

JOSEPH PULLIAM

It's a very spiritual thing to put ourselves last and put others first. In fact, many religions practice this ideology but in different ways. In Buddhism, having compassion is key to living a life of enlightenment. Well, this next writer who's graced our pages a couple of times before, gives us his take on the parable of the good Samaritan. And we all know what that parable represents even today. The good Samaritan is the one who gives without expecting to receive. And that's what we all must do in order to make the world an easier place to live in. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA.

Taking The High Way

Do you remember the parable of the good Samaritan — who, while on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, encountered the Traveler that fell among thieves. Like the Samaritan, I too offer my hand in sincere friendship. Conversely though, my circumstances more closely parallel those of the travelers: Let Jerusalem, that sacred city, symbolize the embarkation of life. (Often referred to as a Journey) let Jericho, a place of no minor (if befallen) renown, represent in her myriad manifestations — home. Now the thieves are the sum of every evil experience which robs us of his essence and blessings. And of course their anti thesis, the Samaritan, summons all that is virtuous.

We also learn from this parable that both a priest — purveyors of rectitude — and a Levite, bastions of the sublime-demonstrated a complete lack of compassion for the distressed traveler. A circumstance comparable to that of a prisoner whose very relations and acquaintances have turned their backs to him (Let the reader use discernment)

But glory to the power that be, all are not as uncaring. In fact, the parable of the Samaritan clearly exemplifies the super-natural fact that my sister my brother, even my mother or friend, are they who do the will of the father.

About that road, obviously it was not safe. But when the Samaritan came upon the travelers, he felt his pain, casting caution aside he then took immediate, generous and caring measures to alleviate the suffering.

Let us harmoniously come together and exercise self-sacrifice, courage, generosity and compassion: life affirming and life saving rules of the road.

Well, now I'm in the chamber
Waitin' on the switch that'll end my life
Throwin' out a few last minute appeals
To a cosmos, so silent and wide

But I'm just an actor
And all this world's a stage
Takin' my seat in the victim's chair
A role, sooner or later, everyone must play

check out the rest of Wild Bill Barnes' BWO piece on page 46